

Wednesday July 8 1998

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Albania 0.50	Guernsey 0.50	Czechia 0.50
Andorra 0.50	Jersey 0.50	Denmark 0.50
Armenia 0.50	Malta 0.50	Egypt 0.50
Austria 0.50	Monaco 0.50	France 0.50
Azerbaijan 0.50	Norway 0.50	Germany 0.50
Bahrain 0.50	Poland 0.50	Greece 0.50
Belarus 0.50	Portugal 0.50	Hungary 0.50
Belgium 0.50	Romania 0.50	Iceland 0.50
Bulgaria 0.50	Slovakia 0.50	Ireland 0.50
Canada 0.50	Slovenia 0.50	Italy 0.50
Cyprus 0.50	Spain 0.50	Japan 0.50
Czechia 0.50	Sweden 0.50	Korea 0.50
Denmark 0.50	Switzerland 0.50	Latvia 0.50
Egypt 0.50	Taiwan 0.50	Lithuania 0.50
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INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Exclusive Cantona interview

Ooh ah, movie star

G2 With European weather

The trouble with success

Blonde and on the edge

G2 pages 10-11

Environment

Pulp fiction

Society, G2 pages 12-13

Observer releases affidavit evidence as row over New Labour lobbying escalates

Blair warns 'We must be pure'

Michael White
Political Editor

DOWNING Street was last night locked in a crucial battle for the reputation of Tony Blair's government after launching a ferocious counter-attack against allegations that New Labour lobbyists used Whitehall contacts to pass confidential information to business clients.

Mr Blair's official spokesman led an orchestrated ministerial campaign to undermine some detailed charges made by the Observer and to deflect others away from the Government and safely in the direction of claims by self-confessed "boastful and brash" lobbyists to prove their political importance.

Mr Blair himself acknowledged "people fluttering around the new government, trying to make all sorts of claims" and said his government had to show itself "purer than pure" and take the severest action against anyone "guilty of impropriety".

Rules governing contacts between lobbyists and key officials may now be tightened, his spokesman revealed.

But Downing Street's offensive in support of policy adviser Roger Liddle, the only government employee in the firing line, last night provoked the Observer to publish an affidavit by its reporter, Gregory Palast, insisting that he had accurately quoted Mr Liddle offering to help him in his purported role as an agent for a US energy firm.

"After a day of ferocious spin-doctoring our story still stands and serious questions about Downing Street's relationship with lobbyists remain unanswered," the paper's deputy editor, Jocelyn Targett said.

Once it was confirmed yesterday that the Observer had no taped version of its conversation with him, Mr Liddle strengthened the tone of his

"We have to be very careful with people fluttering around the new government, trying to make all sorts of claims of influence, that we are purer than pure, that people understand that we will not have any truck with anything that is improper in any shape or form."

Tony Blair

weekend denial that he had offered "to make a call" for Mr Palast. "I was deceived by the Observer, but they have been unable to prove that I said or did anything improper," he said.

He was supported last night by Derek Draper, the former aide to Peter Mandelson, who spent much of the day saying he had been quoted out of context by the newspaper while admitting to being "boastful

and brash". Few of his friends contradicted him after Mr Draper was suspended by his lobbying firm, GPC Market Access, and sacked as an Express columnist.

The Observer last night sought to boost Mr Palast's credibility in the face of personal attacks by revealing that in 1995 he had advised Labour's then-trade spokesman, Jack Cunningham, on energy policy and subsequently "carried out work for Margaret Beckett, Nigel Griffiths and John Birt," all now ministers.

Mr Palast and his fellow-investigator, Mark Swedlund, insisted they had made contemporaneous notes of the crucial conversation, a practice usually accepted from both journalists and police in court hearings.

At a lobbyists reception in Whitehall's historic Banqueting House, Mr Liddle had "handed me his card with his Downing Street and home phone numbers and said: 'Whenever you are ready, just tell me what you want, who you want to meet, and Derek and I will make the call for you. It may be that he said 'Derek and I', rather than 'Derek and me', Mr Palast's affidavit said.

The Observer article is believed to have highlighted a real problem among "naive and immature" New Labour lobbyists, according to more established rivals, some of whom are furious that — as under the Tories — they have been embarrassed by colleagues.

Despite the fact that those involved in the three firms named by the Observer — GPC Market Access, GJM and LAM — used to work for senior Labour ministers in Opposition, Downing Street says that their boasts are not its problem.

Conservatives and Liberal Democrats last night disagreed and demanded a formal inquiry into what the Tories gleefully call "the culture of cronyism."

The leftwing MP, Ken Livingstone, warned of a "generation of young Labour



Tony Blair, who said severe action would be taken against anyone guilty of impropriety

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Abiola death sparks Nigeria panic

Chris McGreal, and Mark Tran in New York

THE MAN widely believed to have won Nigeria's last democratic election, Moshood Abiola, died of a heart attack yesterday after collapsing in front of a delegation sent from Washington to win his freedom from jail.

His death came less than a month after the equally dramatic death of his jailer, the military dictator Sani Abacha — also said officially to have died of cardiac arrest. There were reports last night of panic in parts of Lagos, the country's main city.

Witnesses said people screamed and shouted in the central business district, and many rushed as evening fell to get to their homes as soon as possible.

US administration officials said last night that Chief Abiola started coughing heavily in the presence of the under-secretary of political affairs, Thomas Pickering, and Susan Rice, assistant secretary of state for Africa. The Americans called a doctor and Abiola was taken to a clinic where he died.

To calm opposition fears of murder, the state department in Washington rushed out a statement confirming the Nigerian regime's version of events: "We have no reason to believe anything other than natural causes."

The regime said a post-mortem would be held if Abiola's family permitted it. But one of his daughters immediately accused the army of murdering her father — who spent four years in detention — and some opposition leaders said Abiola's death was suspiciously convenient for Nigeria's military administration.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said in a statement last night: "Chief Abiola had been a symbol of democracy turn to page 2, column 3

BSE disaster bill to top £4bn by 2000

Watchdog reveals scale of most costly peacetime catastrophe

David Hencke
and James Melkie

THE cost of tackling the BSE crisis is set to rise to more than £4 billion, making it Britain's most expensive peacetime catastrophe, according to the first official figures produced yesterday by the National Audit Office, Parliament's financial watchdog.

The crisis has been linked with 27 deaths among humans, and 171,548 cases of BSE among cattle have been identified, according to latest figures released by the Ministry of Agriculture yesterday.

Today's report from the

NAO warns that if Britain complies with European Union requirements to get the worldwide ban on beef exports lifted, 8 million cows will need to be slaughtered over five years.

Some 3.8 million cattle have been killed already with another 4.25 million facing slaughter by 2000.

The additional slaughter costs — in compensation to farmers alone — will add £1.3 billion by 2000 to a bill already set to top £3 billion this year. Up to April this year £2.5 billion had been spent on slaughtering animals, mostly in compensation to farmers and subsidies to abattoirs and meat renderers.

The report reveals that the scale of the slaughter programme has created enormous problems for the Ministry of Agriculture's Intervention Board, with a huge backlog of suspect powdered meat and bone meal awaiting incineration.

Some 260,000 tonnes is stored in 12 warehouses in the United Kingdom at a cost of £7 million a year and this figure is expected to rise by at least 65,000 tonnes this year. The auditors estimate that the mountain will not be eradicated before 2003.

MAFF is expected to have to trim its budget in other areas to pay for the slaughter programme, even though the European Union is due to reimburse Britain for 90 per cent of the costs.

But the National Audit Office reveals that MAFF has

been seeking to cut the overall bill since the export ban in 1996 caused panic among beef consumers.

In 1995 abattoirs — which had surplus capacity — originally sought £120 to slaughter each cow. The Intervention Board initially paid £37.50 but later cut it to £41, and competitive tendering further reduced it to £26.

Renderers — who had no surplus capacity — were originally paid £105 per tonne in Britain and £110 in Northern Ireland. The figure has been cut this year through competitive tendering to £93 a tonne, saving some £5 million a year.

The biggest bill facing the Government is compensation to farmers. The slaughter of all cattle over the age of 30 months alone has cost over £1.25 billion and is expected to cost a further £1 billion.

This is costing 2-75 per animal slaughtered, although average compensation for younger animals is £1,400. In a few cases farmers have been paid as much as £50,000 for pedigree animals that have had to be culled as a precautionary measure.

The National Farmers Union welcomed the report and said its figures "reflect the effect of BSE which still has a crippling impact on the industry".

The spokesman said that since many farmers' incomes had been halved, the compensation paid out to them had been fully justified.

MAFF would not comment on the report's findings, which come while an independent inquiry into the BSE crisis is taking evidence.



Start the week without me

Melvin Bragg's elevation to the Lords led the BBC to ask him to stand down from his long-running programme to avoid accusations of political bias. But he'll be back on the radio at 9am very soon with interviews that don't stray into the public policy arena. See page 3



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Inside

Britain

MAFF has been up to its eyes in a row over the beef crisis. The watchdog has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis.

World News

The UN has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis. The watchdog has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis.

Finance

The Treasury has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis. The watchdog has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis.

Sport

The Football Association has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis. The watchdog has been accused of being too slow to act on the crisis.

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Sketch

Flight of fancy with William and Violet Elizabeth



Simon Hoggart

YESTERDAY the Commons debated an issue of vital importance for the future of democracy in Britain. So we talked about the royal crest first.

Howard Flight introduced his United Kingdom Passports Bill. Mr Flight, who sits in the Conservative interest for Arundel, is worried that our passports are soon going to look like every other EU travel document. To emphasise the main points of his speech he had, sitting next to him, under the same microphone, Teresa Gorman.

The effect was oddly disconcerting, like seeing William Brown being cheered by Violet Elizabeth Bott. "An' another thing," said William. "We could all wake up in 2003 and find we are issued with passports with that circle of stars on them instead of the royal crest."

"Shame!" shouted Violet Elizabeth. "An' that EMU, it's not a country, it's not a state!" said William.

"Hyah, hyah!" said Violet Elizabeth. "Are we citizens of...?" — here William drew a deep breath — "Of Her Majesty the Queen? Or are we EU citizens?"

"Never!" shrieked Violet Elizabeth, so loud that Douglas almost swallowed his Curiously Strong Mint and Jumble began running round in circles, barking. (But not as barking as Mrs Gorman.)

Any moment Mr Flight was going to demand a document that played Colonel Bogey whenever some slimy wog or dago immigration officer opened it. But it turned out that his main concern was for that scroily writing at the start of the traditional passport: "Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State requests and requires in the name of Her Majesty..." This, he told us, has always been known by its

technical title, The Royal Exhortation. Not any more. As we learned from the weekend papers, the new Royal Exhortation is "Get yer eyes tested, ref!"

In the Lords, the peers were also troubled by questions of royalty, in particular the proposed memorial to Princess Diana in Kensington Gardens. Their lordships are not very touchy-feely, except in their private lives. Nor do they reach out to their own emotions. Sometimes they have trouble reaching out to their own ear trumpets.

But several of them do live in Kensington. Or have friends who do. And they are terrified of being overwhelmed by the kind of folk who would turn up at a Diana memorial garden. They made it sound like the famous anonymous description of Dunderberg: "The noise, my dear. And the people!"

Lord Blake inquired whether "the affection in which she was held would be enhanced by the creation of a permanent traffic jam in Kensington" as if there weren't one there already. Lord Ewing asked for the princess to be allowed to rest in peace and for the debate to end.

Am I being cynical, but if she is in a position to follow events down here, might she not be loving every minute of our continued obsession?

Back in the Commons, they were debating a serious Tory motion about the release of information to select committees. (The Government is refusing to release papers about Sierra Leone to the foreign affairs committee, as the Legg Inquiry has yet to finish. This enables it to screw the Commons again while getting its Legg war.)

So vital was this topic, so crucial to the functioning of our democratic organs, so central to the vital issue of the executive's accountability to the legislature, that fully 46 backbenchers were listening.

But that's the point. Since few people come to debates these days, the arena has switched to select committees. Keeping them in the dark as well as the House itself has become an important part of the Government's mission. Expect another official inquiry into influence peddling in Downing Street, just to shut everyone up.

Review

Passion play just a flash in the pan

Mic Moroney

Fully Recovered
The Mint, Dublin

THE Dublin-based company Passion Machine has mounted some great new working-class stage comedies over the past 15 years.

It was behind Roddy Doyle's first outings and a steady stream of plays by company director Paul Mercier, from his bugle successful Studs to more soul-searching pieces.

Other core members of old have also taken to the pen, such as actor Brendan Gleeson or, more recently, Anto Nolan, who is one of the company's quintessential, often comic, hardhaws.

This slightly disturbed machismo force is Nolan's second play. Very much a reminder of early Passion Machine, it has the same ensemble style, the volleyball one-liners, the kids-only ethos.

The setting is a rundown armchair factory, where a bunch of hard-bitten, unconstructed upholsterers labour desultorily, their expectations low in life, love and lunchbox.

A savage pecking order runs downward from the mouse, maritally estranged boss, through seething tradesmen and apprentices to the compulsory fool-boy they all call "Flash".

Candidates for this dubious honour are subjected to a quasi initiation ritual, whereby the older lads strap him across a workbench and indecately glue his balls to his arse. "Flash" exacts immediate revenge, by sliding

home the outside bolts on the metal door of the workshop. His persecutors are now locked in, nearly shattering a stag night, but what follows is long and paradoxical.

The treacherous boy, wavering psychically, feeds in a large quantity of lager and Jack Daniel's through a hole in the toilet wall. Then he admits a hysterical, pistol-wielding relative (a former "Flash" himself) whom he also locks in, just to add to the stridency and mayhem.

Refreshingly foul-mouthed as it is, this is not Tarantino. There is no controlled explosion of energy in the bunker, and the loutish humour scarcely escalates beyond the prop of the blow-up doll.

There is real commitment to some of the performances — Nolan's brother Mick as the melancholy boss, or Les Martin's vicious bone-headed apprentice — but the characters are little more than ciphers, valiantly kicking the plot along like a football.

Maybe Nolan is scratching at a raw patch of interrupted memory; maybe it's all a true story that doesn't quite make it on to the stage.

From the evidence of his last play, which he directed himself — another knock-out of star-obsessed lads in late 1970s Dublin suburbia — he might have better paced his own hailshot of one-liners had he himself been calling the shots, down in the field of activity.

But that is very unfair to director Alan Archbold. Better to wonder: if this play lost its way, where exactly was it going in the first place?

online

Every Thursday in the
The Guardian

Health service could pay high price for pleasure with impotence pill swallowing 25pc of drugs budget

Viagra may cost NHS £1bn

Sarah Boseley
Health correspondent

VIAGRA, the impotence pill, could swallow a quarter of the entire NHS drugs budget once it is licensed for use in Britain, and the bill will be far higher if it is abused by couples seeking sexual pleasure, doctors warned yesterday.

A Viagra prescription for each of the one in 10 men who is impotent would cost £1 billion a year, the British Medical Association annual meeting in Cardiff was told.

Peter Holden, a GP in Matlock, Derbyshire, introduced a motion calling for an urgent

government review of the way all expensive new drugs are introduced.

The Department of Health has commissioned further guidance on the use of new expensive drugs, and the BMA voted unanimously to demand that the government reviews the entire mechanism for their introduction.

Dr Holden said: "Tessa Jowell [minister for public health] has said Viagra will be available on the NHS for those who clinically need it. But how do we diagnose impotence? Is it actual impotence or is it relative?"

Viagra costs 56 a tablet, he said. If 10 per cent of the men in his practice were to be given two tablets a week, it

would cost £125,000 a year. Three tablets a week for all of them would amount to 25 per cent of his drugs budget.

Ian Banks, the BMA men's health spokesman, warned: "For every man affected with erectile dysfunction, there will be another person, even a family, involved."

"There may be depression, a spiral into alcoholism and even suicide."

"To simply say these are expensive drugs and therefore we should curtail their use is flying in the face of what we as medical practitioners have been trained to do all our lives. Here we have a serious medical condition which affects a large number of people."

Derek Machin, a urologist in Liverpool, said after the debate that there was major scope for abuse. "The question is how important you have to be or whether you are."

"There will be an awful lot of people who really don't have a problem, but feel that their sexual function will be enhanced by this drug. As there is no way of knowing which people are impotent and which are not, there will be abuse in both obtaining the drug and using the drug."

"What we have to realise is that not all impotent men are elderly. I quite regularly see teenagers and men in their 20s who are having sexual problems."

Women too may demand Viagra. He thought the demand "will not be insubstantial."

Pfizer, the manufacturers, are researching the use of Viagra in women. "It has been used by women in the United States with some success."

"I'm quite sure that demand will be irresistible for the treatment of women who have a problem with orgasm."

Dr John Chisholm, chairman of the GP's committee of the BMA, was firmly opposed to health authorities handing out Viagra as and when they could afford it.

"Sex by postcode is just as bad as any other treatment by

postcode." He did not want to see Viagra prescribed in the same way as Taxol, the drug for ovarian cancer, the unavailability of which in some areas because of its cost led to "great tragedies".

Nancy Dickey, president of the American Medical Association, said there had been 10 to 12 deaths among Viagra users in the US in the four months since it became available, nearly all of them due to heart failure.

There is "extraordinary demand for the drug", she said, but few safeguards.

Some doctors had been dispensing it from websites on the Internet without proper checks on the health of the patient.

Ulster crisis: more troops sent in

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE Army said yesterday that it was sending another 800 troops to Northern Ireland to combat the rising tide of loyalist violence as the Drumcree crisis deepened. The stand-off is in its fourth day.

Tony Blair will meet the leaders of the Orange Order tomorrow in an effort to defuse the growing backlash against the Farquhar Commission's decision to ban the order's Portadown district from its traditional route along the predominantly nationalist Garvaghy Road. The critical point will come at the weekend, when thousands are expected to flock to Drumcree for the July 12 celebrations.

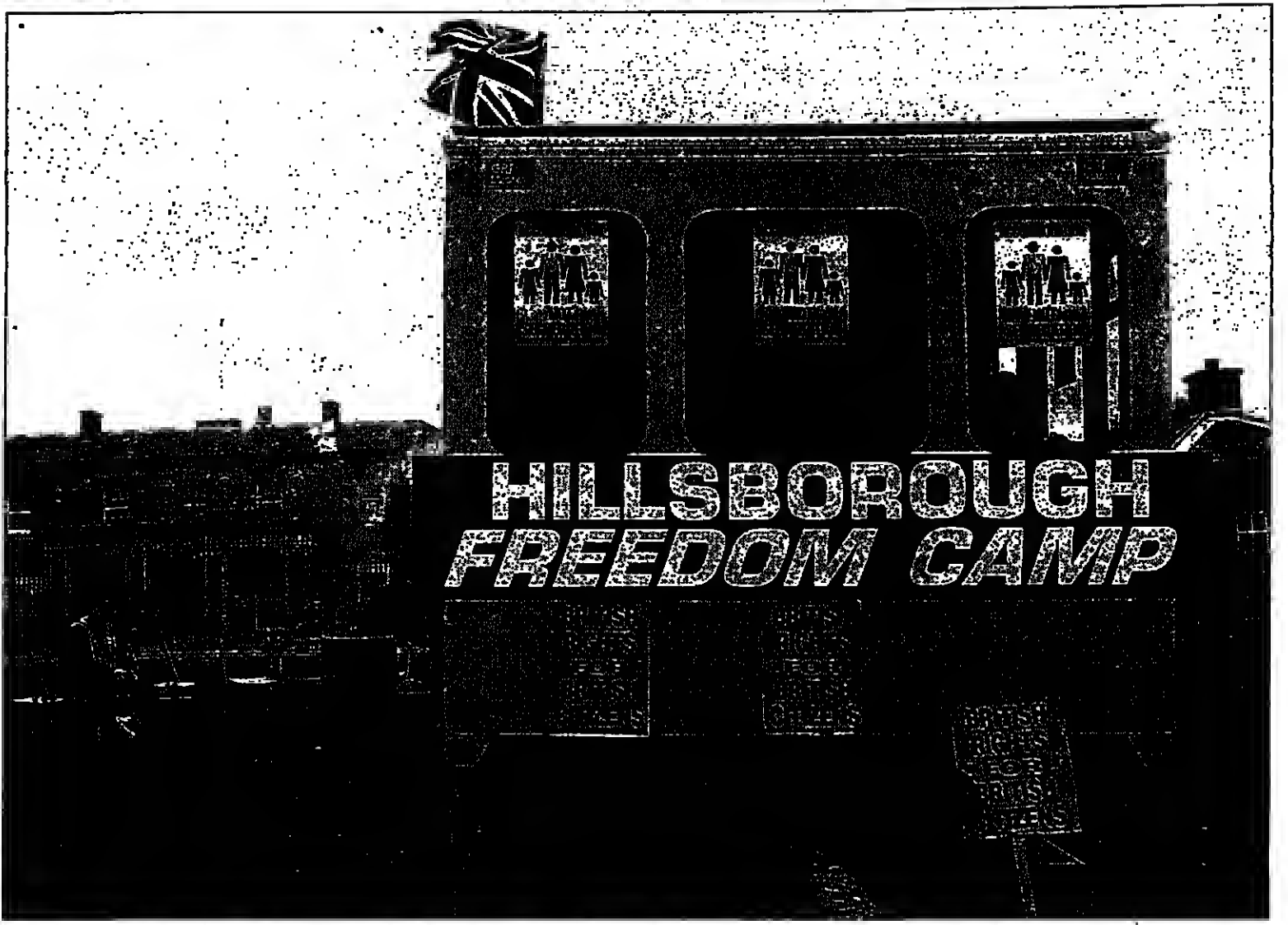
Mr Blair will refuse to overturn the ruling which routed the Orangemen. Some hardliners wanted the talks boycotted. The summit may take place in Belfast.

Mr Blair said: "We have come so far in Northern Ireland. We have come over the hurdle of the agreement, over the hurdle of the referendum and over the hurdle of the assembly elections. We have the possibility of a tremendous future in Northern Ireland, but we have to get over this hurdle as well."

The extra 800 soldiers from the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment and the 1st Battalion the King's Regiment will begin arriving today, bringing the Army's strength in Northern Ireland to 18,000. That includes 1,000 troops sent last weekend.

The Army and police are being stretched as the mood in Northern Ireland turns increasingly ugly. The Orange Order, which is organising protests, says it wants them to be peaceful, but loyalist paramilitaries are now involved in the worst disorder. Buses and cars were again seized and set on fire.

Companies of the Ulster Defence Association were behind the violence in three districts of Belfast on Monday. The UDA is on ceasefire but is disenchanted after its political ally, the Ulster Defence Association, failed to win a seat in the new assembly. The



An Orangeman's lone vigil yesterday outside Hillsborough Castle, official residence of Mo Mowlam, Northern Ireland Secretary. PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX NASH

Loyalist Volunteer Force, on ceasefire for two months, is also implicated.

Loyalist snipers shot at police on Monday. The RUC came under a hail of petrol bombs and were targeted in blast bomb attacks. Before last night, almost 60 RUC officers had been injured. One policeman was suffering from a broken skull. Two more had their homes attacked while their families were inside.

Violence was particularly bad in Carrickfergus, on the northern outskirts of Belfast. Several Catholic families were burned out of their homes. A bed-and-breakfast business in the town came under petrol bomb attack, and 14 guests were forced to flee. Arsonists also targeted a Catholic primary school.

David Trimble, First Minister, said yesterday: "We cannot allow this to continue any longer. There are some elements there who want to exploit the situation for their own ends."

John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, appeared on collision course with Mr Trimble. As his

leader urged accommodation, Mr Taylor demanded that the march be pushed through.

Negotiations were continuing behind the scenes. But there was no sign of the crucial breakthrough, an agreement by the Orangemen to talk to Brendan MacDonagh, leader of the residents. They refuse to speak to him because he was jailed for six years in 1982 for offences leading to the bombing of the British Legion in Portadown.

The atmosphere at Drumcree, peaceful until now, was deteriorating. Loyalists blocked both ends of the Garvaghy Road on several occasions before police in riot gear forced them back. The protesters in the fields at Drumcree began playing Lambie drums in rotation in an attempt to aggravate residents.

This weekend will be make or break. July 12, when Orangemen celebrate William III's victory over James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, is the main marching day in Northern Ireland. There will be a massive influx to Drumcree.

Abiola's sudden death shocks Nigerian public

continued from page 1

In Nigeria, it is therefore particularly tragic that he should die now at a time of change and hope.

The visit by Mr Pickering was the latest in a stream of high-level delegations to meet Abiola in the past fortnight as part of a growing international effort to press the country's latest military regime to restore civilian government.

The United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, emerged from meetings with both Abiola and the government confident that the winner of the country's 1993 election would soon be freed. But he also said Abiola was realistic enough to realise he could not continue to claim the presidency.

It was his decision to Jay

claim to the presidency in 1994 that caused Abacha to jail him. But a Commonwealth delegation that also met Abiola said he was refusing to sign a declaration renouncing his election victory.

Although still widely supported in his Yoruba homeland in south-eastern Nigeria, Abiola had long lost support in much of the rest of the country and was a deeply divisive figure.

He was also reported to have become increasingly disoriented and out of touch with reality.

He had further divided opponents of the military, and his own family, by apparently — and in contrast to the Commonwealth group's impression — renouncing his claim

to the presidency. It was an open secret in Nigeria that he was prepared to go to almost any lengths to win his release.

But Abiola's decision to walk away from the 1993 election was widely viewed as a betrayal of an important point of a principle which could have been used to force concessions from the military.

But however controversial Abiola was, he represented the primary symbol of democracy for many Nigerians and opposition groups. Many will be shocked by the timing of his death, coming as freedom looked imminent. It is also likely to elevate Abiola to a martyrdom among some Nigerians that he could not have hoped for had he lived.

'Streets tsar' to have big budget

Sarah Hall

A "STREETS tsar" with a £145 million budget and a brief to cut homelessness in London by two thirds by 2002 was announced by the Government yesterday.

The "powerful individual" will head a body aiming to get the 400-odd homeless on any one night off London streets. Likened to the "drugs tsar" — the anti-drug co-ordinator, Keith Hellawell — the new co-ordinator will develop strategies to cut homelessness, generate funding, assess accommodation needs and keep track of the flow of rough sleepers.

The streets tsar will be appointed by March. His £145 million budget will be for the initial three years.

It was one of a raft of measures announced yesterday as the Government confirmed its determination to reduce



A rough sleeper in a London subway. If "tough targets" are not reached by 2002, the homeless could find themselves criminals. PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM TURNER

the 2,000 rough sleepers in England by two thirds in the next four years. Similar specialists, appointed by local authorities, will spearhead campaigns in cities including Birmingham, Oxford, Manchester, Cam-

bridge, Brighton and Bristol. The Government said coercive measures, criminalising rough sleeping, could be introduced if the "tough targets" were not reached by 2002 — a suggestion that homelessness charities said

would not work. Tony Blair launched the first integrated strategy to tackle homelessness as he visited a shelter in London and released Rough Sleeping, the report by the Social Exclusion Unit, that produced the figures on street

sleepers. Describing the homeless as the most "visible symbol of division in our society", he also promised a major programme to prevent those leaving care, prisons and the armed forces from living on the streets; rule

changes to enable rough sleepers to gain instant help with finding work; and an inter-departmental group of ministers to work on the problem.

Leader comment, page 11

Corrosion in piping at the insurance market's City headquarters is one of many cases of structural degradation in landmark New Age buildings

Made of concrete, glass and stainless steel, the Lloyd's building (right) was started in 1979 and completed in 1986. It cost £187 million. Floodlit at night, it has become a City landmark. With permanent "service" cranes erected on the roof, the building has heart-stopping external lifts and all its service pipes — such as those for central heating and air conditioning — are on the outside. Few traditional Lloyd's underwriters and brokers like the building. Many say it gives them the feeling of working in a multi-storey car park.



Lloyd's rust costs Rogers £12m

Pauline Springett and Julia Finch

A SEVERE case of rusting pipes at the futuristic Lloyd's of London insurance building in central London has left the design team that created the towering glass and steel landmark with a £12 million repair bill. The building's controversial architect, Richard Rogers — together with the engineers and builders who constructed the much criticised Lloyd's headquarters in 1986 — has agreed to pay compensation to the insurance market after two years of wrangling.

But the rusty Lloyd's pipes are just the latest of a series of serious structural problems to afflict some of the best known examples of modern architecture. Cracks, leaks, discolouring, sinking foundations and disintegrating cladding are now emerging as almost a feature of modern building design.

At Eland House, the new home for the Department of the Environment near Westminster, protective glass louvers — meant to cut out the glare of the sun — have proved to be a wind. Heretofore, the building has windows that have turned out to be hard to keep clean and a temperature and lighting system that is uncontrollable.

Heating and cooling were supposed to be regulated automatically, but workers say it is either boiling or freezing and a remote-control system that keeps the lights on for night workers also turns them off if people sit quietly at their desks and do not move around.

The Lloyd's building in

Lime Street at the heart of the City of London is instantly recognisable for its "inside-out" structure, with service pipes normally enclosed within the fabric of a building clamped to the exterior as an unusual architectural feature.

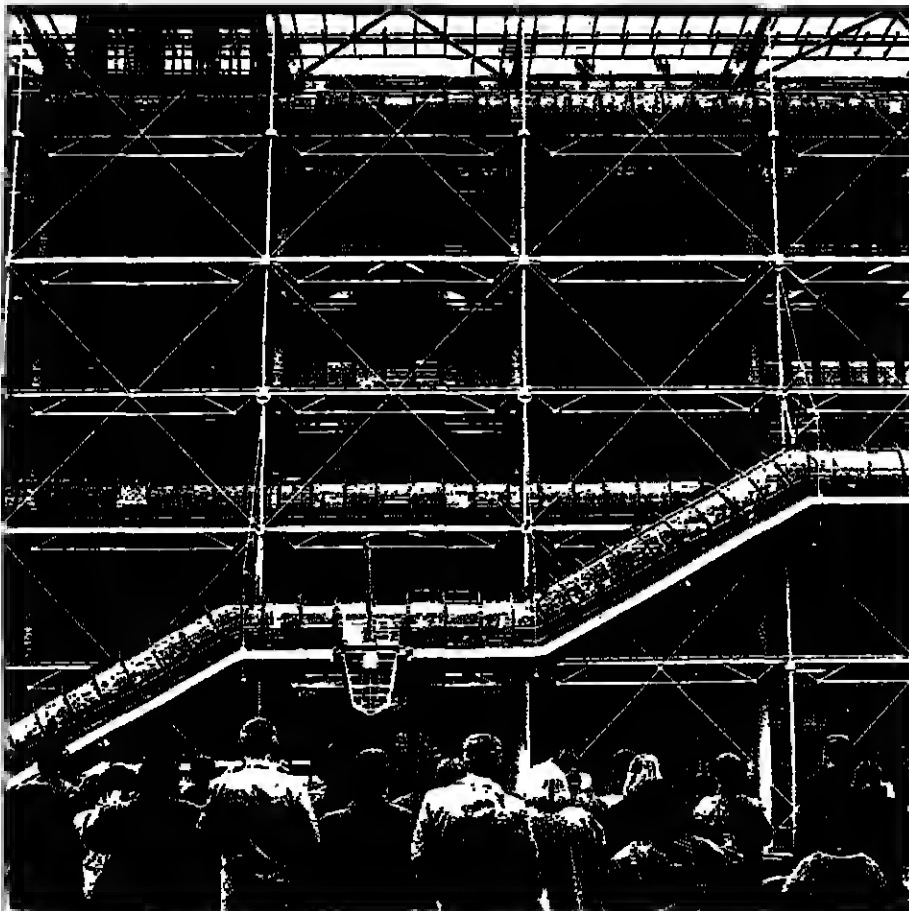
But during a routine inspection in 1995, surveyors discovered corrosion. Rust was found inside the cladding protecting miles of the vertical water and waste pipes. The repair work has taken 18 months to complete.

The £12 million payout to Lloyd's is being shared by the Richard Rogers Partnership, Bovis Construction and engineers Ove Arup, Haden Young and Senior Construction Services.

The Rogers firm, which yesterday refused to comment, has run into problems on several occasions with its New Age designs. Only last month the facade of its £27 million new law courts in Bordeaux shifted, resulting in the revolutionary glass supports shattering. The Rogers partnership also designed Paris's landmark Pompidou Centre, which has now been closed for a year while intensive refurbishment is carried out.

Rogers' latest project is the £800 million Millennium Dome in Greenwich. The project, controversial in itself, has attracted criticism from many quarters including predictions that the structure, which is big enough to house Wembley Stadium twice over, will leak.

A spokesman at the Royal Institute of British Architects said that architects working at the leading edge of the building industry were bound to face teething trouble but believed the real cause of many defects was the pressure design



The Pompidou Centre (left), built in the mid-1970s, is constructed of steel, concrete and glass and painted in primary colours — and is now closed for refurbishment. It attracted four times the number of visitors originally anticipated and has been described as a "maintenance nightmare".

Built in a spacious square it was, like the Lloyd's building, the brainchild of Richard Rogers. The interior of the Paris building has now been redesigned and it is due to reopen shortly.

The previous Environment Secretary, John Gummer, moved ministers and 2,000 civil servants into Eland House (not pictured) heralded as the latest in environmentally friendly design, complete with thermal buffers, double atria and ozone-friendly refrigerators. The cost of the move was £48 million in 1996-97.

Despite problems with rattling windows and uncontrollable heating and lighting systems, budget controls rule out any major changes to the building for the next few years.

teams found themselves working under. "Cash is king and time is the god," he said. "Buildings have to be designed and built as quickly as possible. If architects and engineers were given more time on the drawing board then problems could be rectified before building is complete, instead of on site after opening."

He added that lawyers were also partly to blame. He said property developers often had whole departments of legal advisers ready to pounce on any defect and demand compensation. "There is a real blame society these days. People in the construction industry live in fear of litigation."

Elsewhere around London, the Royal National Theatre complex on the South Bank, singled out by the Prince of Wales as one of the capital's biggest development disasters, has suffered from discolouration and leaks. And the new British Library alongside Euston Station — which the prince described as looking like an academy suitable for training secret police — was delayed while designers attempted to sort out problems with cabling and an automatic bookshelf system that buried books from the shelves.

High pound could drive Rover out of Britain

David Gow
Industrial Editor

THE West Midlands, Britain's manufacturing heartland, suffered a potentially grievous blow yesterday when the car maker Rover warned that the continued strength of the pound could eventually force it to shift production abroad.

Admitting that its plans to be profitable by 2000 are being seriously jeopardised by an overvalued pound, Rover said it was actively considering taking more components from abroad in a drive to slash costs.

This new threat to Midlands component suppliers comes just days after consultants KPMG forecast that high costs and poor quality could drive a third of the region's 2,100 parts makers out of business over the next three years, with the loss of up to 75,000 jobs.

Senior executives at Rover's German owners, BMW, have been in the forefront of British industry's campaign for concerted action to bring sterling down to a rate of around DM12.60, compared with the current DM16, to avoid a further squeeze on exports and profits.

But yesterday's warnings are among the most dramatic evidence of the strong pound's impact on manufacturing and come on the eve of today's meeting of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee (MPC), which could nudge interest rates — and the pound with them — even higher. UK rates are more than double those of France and Germany.

Ken Jackson, leader of the ABEU engineering union, said: "Rover's threat proves that the soaring pound has brought British manufacturing to its knees."

Having forced Rover to buy components overseas, the strength of sterling could export British jobs as well. The MPC must take notice of this and not raise rates this week."

Rover officials, responding to comments made by unnamed senior executives in a trade paper that the firm had a crisis on its hands, insisted that the company had no immediate plans to shift production abroad. "We are not in a crisis," they said.

The problems at Rover have worsened since the end of last month when derivatives contracts that protected it against sterling's rise expired. Plans to boost exports beyond last year's 230,000 cars and raise sales and margins were therefore hit by full exposure to sterling's strength.

Rover has less than 10 per cent of the domestic market and last year made a net loss

of £91 million. If sterling remains high during the next two or three years, Rover will have lost hundreds of millions of pounds despite investment of £2 billion by BMW in the four years since it took it over in 1994, and would move output abroad. So far it has only a South African plant assembling Land-Rovers from kit, with a similar factory due to open in Brazil soon.

Company officials made plain that investment, now running at £800 million a year, and jobs, now 40,000 at group level, were sacrosanct. The only option in cutting costs was to buy more components abroad for new models.

Rover's current range takes 85 per cent of its components — worth £3.5 billion a year — from UK suppliers but new models such as the planned R40 executive car, replacing the 300 and 600 series and to be built at Cowley, Oxford, will use nearer 75 per cent British content.

Land-Rover's new model, the Freelander, relies on 146 main suppliers when a few years ago it would have been nearer 500.

According to James Bentley, chairman of KPMG's European automotive prac-

'Rover's threat proves that the pound has brought UK manufacturing to its knees'

tice, based in Birmingham, component suppliers are already being forced to cut costs by up to 10 per cent a year but a host of smaller suppliers in the West Midlands are falling down on the price, quality and delivery times demanded by firms such as Rover.

His study sees the region's share of the UK market cut from 17 to 12 per cent by 2000, with 700 firms "de-selected" by customers and others forced to merge or be taken over.

This is part of a world-wide trend to cut huge overcapacity which has seen the number of components suppliers cut from 30,000 a decade ago to 8,000 now, with European unions warning that by 2010 only 20 mega-suppliers will exist globally. Similarly, auto industry executives expect global car manufacturers to dwindle to just five or six within the next 10-15 years.

Mr Bentley said West Midlands suppliers had the most to lose in the UK. "There are many, many small suppliers surviving and even prospering but the more you have the more you stand to lose."

City notebook, page 13

Ennobled Bragg to stop starting the week

Presenter quits after 10 years at the helm of Radio 4 flagship

Stuart Miller

MELVYN Bragg is to step down after a decade as the anchor of Start the Week, Radio 4's flagship cultural programme which has become a broadcasting institution.

The decision to leave the Monday morning show, revealed yesterday, was prompted by Mr Bragg's elevation to the House of Lords.

The announcement of his life peerage brought accusations from Conservatives last week that his objectivity and impartiality could no longer be relied on.

James Boyle, controller of Radio 4, said: "Since Melvyn was able to make public his future elevation to the House of Lords, we have been discussing with him the implications for his role on Start the Week."

"We recognised that although Start the Week isn't mainstream current affairs programme it does occasionally deal with matters of public policy. "And together we have come to the conclusion that the best way forward is to move on."

Peter Ainsworth, the Conservatives' culture, media and sport spokesman, who

has also written to Channel 4 claiming a potential conflict of interest in Mr Bragg presenting its programme, The Sundays, welcomed the decision.

"The BBC has a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of political impartiality and for this reason it was right to ask Mr Bragg to stand down."

The presenter's departure comes a year after he publicly clashed with Mr Boyle over plans to revamp the programme by cutting it from 55 minutes to 30 minutes and reducing the number of guests to fit in with the new length.

The proposals sent a shock wave through the programme's loyal devotees, as Mr Bragg threatened to quit over what he saw as an attempt to dilute its "challenging and intellectual" content.

"If they want it to go down-market, then I am not their man," he said at the time.

In the end, Mr Bragg won the argument, and the programme was cut by just 10 minutes — although some observers suggested that the 45-minute length had been Mr Boyle's intention all along.

When the series first started in 1970 under Richard Baker, then Russell Harty, Start the Week included cooking tips and later featured musical slots from Victoria Wood.

But under Mr Bragg, who took over in September 1988, it was shaped into an arena for heavyweight debate among guests who included authors and academics.

Under his charge, the pro-

gramme has become a mainstay of the station's intellectual output.

Its ratings have risen from around 600,000 listeners to a peak of 1.5 million — one of the highest Radio 4 audiences after the Today programme.

"I shall be sad to leave Start the Week," Mr Bragg said yesterday.

"I have worked with some excellent people on the programme over the years. I'll miss it and wish it well."

He will present the programme for the last time on July 20, when the current series ends, before moving on to front a newly commissioned 9am interview series and a sequence of programmes on the English language.

A new Start the Week presenter has yet to be named.

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T.S. Eliot said this in 1915: The Family Reunion (1939)



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Eric Cantona, the movie star, interviewed by Jean-Pierre Lavoignat

G2 page 2

BBC's £1bn to fight off rivals

Simon Beavis
Media Business Editor

THE BBC has drawn up controversial plans to amass a £1 billion war chest to spend on new programmes, technology and on-line services to protect its position as the dominant force in British broadcasting.

The scale of the spending plans underlines the BBC's determination to see off challenges from Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and other powerful media groups as the country moves into a new era of digital television and radio.

The plans — which are bound to provoke an outcry from the BBC's commercial competitors — are set to be made public next week when the BBC publishes its annual accounts in a new and more transparent way.

They will also provoke tremors within the corporation as they imply a new and more stringent programme of cost savings to help fund the investment of £200 million a year over the next five years.

The accounts are also expected to reveal that the total remuneration of Sir John Birt, the BBC's director general, rose by nearly 9 per cent to just under £300,000 last year — a period when average pay among the BBC's 23,500 staff went up by just under 1 per cent.

The accounts — which cover a period when funding from the licence fee rose above the £2 billion mark for the first time — have been overhauled in the face of allegations that the BBC has used opaque accounting practices to hide the fact it is cross-subsidising its commercial ventures from the licence fee.

Executives have taken the allegations to heart but are

determined that, in being more open, they will also be more aggressive about their plans to keep the BBC in the vanguard of the digital age.

The accounts will reveal that the corporation is sitting on a £300 million digital war chest even though it has spent nearly £100 million in the last year alone on new digital services such as the rolling News 24 service and BBC On-line. Some £244 million has been set aside from the sale of the BBC's transmission system.

Executives will stress that although cash reserves will be boosted by another £180 million from an above inflation rise in the licence fee this year, after that the fee will begin to decline under an agreement with the Government.

They will stress that to raise the remaining £520 million to spend on digital TV and radio, the corporation will have to introduce a new efficiency drive. Simultaneously, it will launch an all-out campaign to exploit the BBC brand through programming joint ventures, publishing, and merchandising.

For the first time also the accounts will detail the earnings of the commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, and other revenue from commercial programming deals which together have generated nearly £90 million in the year to the end of March.

But Worldwide is understood to have been set a target of £200 million a year by 2006, when the current Royal Charter expires, and has been given the go-ahead to boost earnings further through commercial ventures.

The accounts are expected to show the BBC is already exceeding its target for efficiency savings running £14 million ahead of plan at £76 million in the year to March.

City notebook, page 13

Stand-off over student fees

Anne Perkins
Political Correspondent

THE Government was locked in a constitutional stand-off last night after its third defeat in the Lords on student fees in Scotland.

Peers voted by a majority of 211 against charging non-Scottish students fees for their fourth year at a Scottish university. Downing Street said there would be no climb-down. If the Lords reject the bill one more time, it will fall altogether.

Peers — including two Labour rebels, Lord Stairs and Lord Stoddart — voted by 319 to 109 for a Liberal Democrat amendment ending the anomaly. The former Liberal leader, Lord Steel, who led the attack, said last night: "This is a sensational result. The Government has been defeated by an overwhelming coalition of Liberal Democrats, Conservatives, cross-benchers, bishops and Labour backbenchers. Only Labour's obedient troops backed the Government's incoherent and unjust position."

The president of the students' union, Andrew Pakes, warning that the NUS would challenge the Government in the European Court on the issue, said: "The Government seems intent on pushing the legislation to the brink of destruction, despite the fact that they cannot believe the Scottish anomaly is a principle worth such a stance."

Opposition peers were last night still discussing whether to accept the verdict of the Commons, or to try to find a face-saving compromise, such as an amendment accepting the fees but with a commitment to review after one or two years.

Some Tories believe there is such widespread opposition to the "Scottish anomaly" that the issue provides the best possible opportunity for a show of strength against the Commons over Labour's plans to end hereditary peers' voting rights.

Meanwhile MPs will debate another highly contentious issue when an amendment to the Campaign Bill, outlawing predatory pricing in the newspaper industry, comes up today.

Ginola follows in Diana's footsteps



Tottenham Hotspur's French footballer David Ginola (right), who is to take over the lead role in the International Red Cross's campaign against landmines which Princess Diana (left, in Angola) filled before her death last August.

PHOTOGRAPHS: GIOVANNI RUFINO (left) and PAUL VICENTE (right)

Soccer star to head anti-mines campaign

Stuart Millar on a celebrity role model taking a serious turn

DAVID Ginola, the exquisitely maned, square-jawed heart-throb who adds a touch of Gallic authenticity to the BBC's World Cup coverage, has been signed up to take over the role left vacant by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in the International Red Cross campaign against landmines.

The £2 million Tottenham Hotspur striker and former French footballer of the year will speak today at a news conference in Paris about the contribution that he hopes to make to the International Red Cross campaign.

But in a statement, the

International Red Cross said yesterday: "David Ginola is first and foremost a footballer and is supporting the campaign as he recognises the terrible effects that injuries caused by anti-personnel mines can have on the lives of people all over the world."

It insisted that Mr Ginola, aged 31, in no way considered himself a replacement for Princess Diana, but the comparisons between their roles are obvious.

Like Diana, Mr Ginola plans to visit a mine-affected country — football commitments permitting. It was the princess's visit

in January last year to Angola, where there are an estimated 15 million mines, and where a third of the population are thought to have been maimed by them, that shot the issue to the

'He's an incredibly talented man who considers himself lucky to have two legs and wants to help those less fortunate'

forefront of international concern.

Shortly before her death last August, she visited Bosnia in promote the cause as a guest of the

Landmine Survivors Network, which yesterday announced that Queen Noor of Jordan is to succeed Diana as its patron.

The Red Cross hopes that Mr Ginola will, like the

princess, give the campaign an international flavour. He is understood to have become involved through informal contacts with the French Red Cross which,

along with the British Red Cross, will co-ordinate his work.

The new role marks a more serious turn in Mr Ginola's career. Married with two daughters, he has listed his passions as cars, boats, eating out, hines music, the occasional cigarette, golf, backgammon and his family. As well as a lucrative contract to advertise L'Oréal shampoo, he has appeared in a Renault commercial and dabbled in modelling.

The appointment was welcomed by anti-mine groups. Campaigner Chris Moon said: "He is someone who is a role model for lots

of young people, and he is going to take the message to people in Europe who haven't really been involved in the issue.

"The principle behind his involvement is that he is someone who considers himself fortunate to have two legs, an incredibly talented man who wants to do something to help people who are less fortunate."

With the Government under pressure to ratify the Landmines Treaty before the first anniversary of Diana's death on August 31, MPs will work an extra day to pass the Anti-Personnel Mines Bill published last week.

New evidence keeps Robinson's future in doubt



Geoffrey Robinson: surprise move by Sir Gordon Downey

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

THE future of Treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson was still in doubt last night as the powerful committee of MPs examining whether he broke parliamentary rules by not declaring a £200,000 directorship delayed its decision for a week.

It is understood that MPs were presented with fresh evidence from Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, on the activities of the Paymaster General when he headed two companies owned

by the disgraced Labour media tycoon, the late Robert Maxwell.

Sir Gordon has been following an audit trail to find out whether Mr Robinson has hidden a £200,000 payment. Information has been sought from auditors Coopers & Lybrand, receivers Arthur Anderson, and former Maxwell directors.

His report has been with MPs for two weeks but yesterday he apparently surprised MPs by offering more information on the Paymaster-General's business affairs.

Robert Sheldon, chairman of the Standards and Privileges committee, said yesterday that MPs would be meeting again next Tuesday to consider the case. He told reporters that they would be considering "further comments" by Sir Gordon.

Mr Robinson has faced a series of allegations that he failed to declare paid directorships in the Commons Register of Members' Interests.

The Tories have accused Mr Robinson of breaking parliamentary rules by failing to declare a £200,000 payment

they allege he received as chairman of Hollis Industries. The company was taken over by Maxwell and went bankrupt in 1991.

Mr Robinson has denied receiving the money or any breach of Commons rules. He has said that the firm's accounts which record the payment were wrong.

The Paymaster General is also accused of failing to declare a £150,000 payment from Central & Sherwood, which

was also owned by Mr Maxwell.

Mr Robinson has admitted receiving the money, but has said that he received the payment too late to meet the register's deadline.

The shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, David Heathcoat-Amory, said: "This further delay should help the committee get to the bottom of this tangled relationship, none of which has been disclosed to the House."

Rising asthma deaths fear

Lucy Patton

UP TO 24,000 people are dying each year in an "asthma epidemic" caused by air pollution, Environment Minister Michael Meacher said yesterday.

The Government was "very concerned" about rising levels of asthma — blamed partly on traffic fumes — among children, he added. Measures would be taken to reduce emissions and the number of vehicles in next month's transport White Paper, he told MPs.

Mr Meacher stressed that, during Britain's EU presidency, which ended last month, the EU had agreed to reduce emissions and improve fuel quality "to such an extent that new cars will be between 30 per cent and 50 per cent less polluting".

He said a Health Department committee had estimated that between 12,000 and 24,000 deaths were "brought forward" annually by short-term exposure to air pollutants from all sources.

Union chiefs yesterday demanded action on an epidemic of workplace asthma,

now the fastest growing occupational disease.

It is responsible for one in every six days lost through work-related illness, with Britain's 150,000 victims increasing by an extra 7,000 a year, said the TUC, which is calling for a code of practice for employers on their responsibilities to protect staff from the disease.

Its survey, Out of Breath and Out of Work, which is backed by the National Asthma Campaign, says compensation claims are growing faster than for any other work-related disease.

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Doctors to hold conference on assisted deaths

BMA moves on suicide

Sarah Boseley
Health Correspondent

DOCTORS, uneasy at what they see as efforts by the pro-euthanasia lobby to enlist them in their cause, are to call a major conference to discuss whether they should help very sick patients to commit suicide.

The issue sparked a tense debate at the British Medical Association's annual meeting in Cardiff yesterday. The BMA's official position is opposed to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, which are both illegal. But those who feel that doctors must discuss the difficult ethical issues further and establish the views if possible of all healthcare professionals, led by a contingent of junior doctors, won the day.

John Marks, former BMA chairman, made an impassioned call for representatives to listen to the voice of youth, reminding them of a previous ethical dilemma. "In 1968, the policy of this association was that although so-called social abortion was legal, it was unethical. I told the meeting they were hypocritical, not Hippocratic, because any patient of mine with £100 in her pocket could get an abortion." He had been booed off the platform, he said, and yet four years later, David Steel's Abortion Bill went through.

"In over 40 years, I have never deliberately killed a patient, but I have given them increasing doses, sometimes huge doses, of drugs to ease their pain in their final weeks, knowing that it might shorten their lives. Perhaps I'm being hypocritical, I don't know. I just know that when the time comes, I want a doctor who will give me a lot of assistance."

"It is just possible that the young Turks are light years ahead of the old dodgers, as they were 30 years ago, but only full and open discussion can tell us," he said.

Carl Erhardt, a senior registrar at Charing Cross hospital in London, said a conference was "quite

unnecessary". Physician-assisted suicide was "not only morally wrong but quite incompatible with the ethics of medicine". He observed that "the right to die organisations in the UK appear to be increasingly focusing on assisted suicide as a first stage in achieving their aim of euthanasia."

He also referred to doctors in the Netherlands who had controversially helped pa-



'I have given patients growing doses of drugs, knowing that it might shorten their lives'

John Marks (above) former BMA chairman

tients to die. "I understand that the Dutch experience shows that euthanasia, once sanctioned, is applied to those who have not asked for it."

But Stuart Horner, a former chairman of the BMA's ethics committee, said he "shared the concern of those who fear that the protagonists of euthanasia, having so spectacularly failed in an open agenda, are now resorting by stealth to a hidden agenda."

"Decisions at the end of life are becoming increasingly part of modern medical practice. They will not go away because we refuse to discuss them."

The meeting overwhelmingly voted for the proposed conference to try to find a common position, even

though most speakers made it clear that they did not expect the BMA's opposition to physician-assisted suicide to change.

But a motion declaring that doctors had an obligation to their patients to help them end their lives, if that was what they wanted, was soundly defeated.

At a press conference afterwards, Michael Wilks, chairman of the ethics committee, said more patients were not asking doctors to help them die. It was not something patients wanted to discuss. They were more concerned about getting treatment and pain relief at the end of their lives.

He hoped the debate could move on to a different level. "What really matters is that the patient can make competent refusals of treatment. If it gets us away from the much more difficult issue of termination of life, which is an issue which I think most patients don't want to contemplate at all."

The younger hospital doctors raised other ethical concerns yesterday.

"They said that they were expected to tell patients what their treatment would involve and what the consequences might be, so that the patient could give properly informed consent. But they found that what goes on in hospitals is far from satisfactory."

Paul Albert, doing his first year in hospital after medical school, said that although there were procedures for talking to the patient through the treatment they were about to have, "I have seen very few of these procedures performed and don't know enough of the details to get patients to give informed consent. A lot of patients are wheeled into theatre without really knowing what is about to happen to them. This is unsatisfactory. We are really sitting on a bit of a timebomb here."

Dr Wilks agreed that procedures were not always followed, but argued against the setting up of a working party to put together guidelines for doctors. But the junior doctors' motion succeeded by a narrow margin on a card vote.



A scene from the popular TV drama series, Peak Practice. Doctors have complained such programmes distort the vicissitudes of medical life

GPs rail at TV medical dramas for nursing false hopes

Stuart Miller

DOCTORS yesterday launched a scathing attack on television medical dramas which they accused of misleading viewers.

A year's work on doctor-patient relationships could be destroyed by a minute of television fiction, the BMA conference was told.

Senior BMA figures have

opened discussions with television producers in an attempt to persuade them to balance dramatic necessity with reality.

ITV's *Peak Practice* drama and the GPs who form its central characters were singled out as the worst offenders for giving viewers the impression that doctors were able to visit patients on demand at any time of day or night.

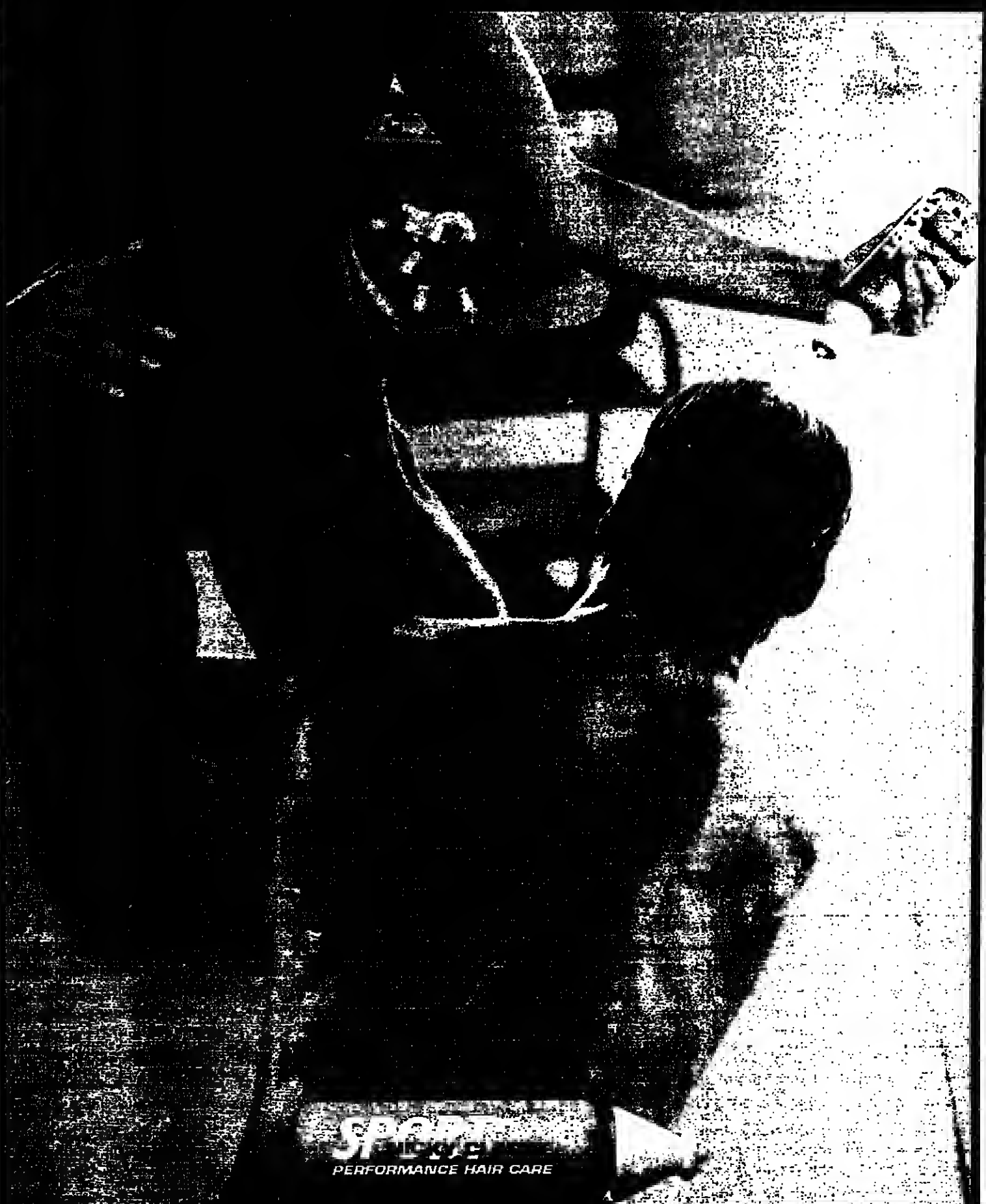
"I was incredulous when I watched the first episode," Chaand Noppaul, a London GP told the conference. "When a man collapsed in the street, the neighbours didn't call an ambulance, they called their GP. When a patient went missing on the moors, the GP took the whole morning off to search for him."

"I would like to know how they manage this if, like other GPs, they have 50 patients sitting in the surgery. I feel these programmes should be vetted in order to educate the public about how doctors really work."

There has been a rapid growth in medical-based television dramas in recent years. BBC's *Casualty* has enjoyed impressive ratings, while the American series, *ER*, starring George Clooney, has been a huge hit in Britain and America.

Spoil Sport by Nicky Clarke.

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Bully laughed as victim lay dying, court told

Heien Carter

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy was beaten to death by a school bully who laughed as he lay on a pavement with severe head injuries, the Old Bailey heard yesterday.

The attack on Manish Patel was so violent that he suffered brain damage, two skull fractures, bleeding in the brain and a severed lens in one eye. He began coughing up blood, had a fit and died in hospital 39 hours later.

He was punched and kicked on July 7 last year in Kenton, Middlesex, as he returned home from the first day of a holiday job.

The defendants, aged 16 and 17, who cannot be named, are both charged with actual bodily harm. The younger one is also charged with murder.

Prosecution barrister Julian Bevan QC told the jury that 5ft 5in Manish Patel was much smaller, lighter and

weaker than his tormentors — one of whom had described him as quite pathetic, he said. He described the attack as bullying in its crudest form and said: "The 16-year-old defendant maintained a systematic physical attack on that young man... who was no match for him. During the course of that attack he struck Manish Patel repeatedly about the head using both his fists, punching him on both sides of his head, punching him in the stomach, kneeling him and ultimately delivering a vicious upper cut into his mouth. It was not only a vicious attack but a wholly unprovoked one."

He said no single blow caused the injuries but as a result of the assault, Manish fell onto the road and cracked his head on concrete.

Mr Bevan said the 16-year-old had wanted to give his victim a hiding for some weeks, probably relating to a small amount of cannabis.

Manish had met the two defendants on a bus and when

he left it at Kenton, the younger one demanded money and took him into an alley where he slapped and prodded him, and then ordered him to choose which teenager he wanted to fight, the court heard.

After Manish chose the 17-year-old, he "went mad", hitting him so hard he cut his own fist. The prosecution claim that minutes later the 16-year-old launched his own assault.

Mr Bevan said: "Manish Patel was at his mercy and he showed him none. When Manish fell his attacker... muttered words to the effect of 'pick him up, I want to hit him again', and did. He even ignored pleas by his friend to stop hitting Manish, and stood laughing when he collapsed."

A friend of Manish's, Donald Carter, 19, told the court he had seen him being dragged by his clothing by the 16-year-old a month before the fatal attack.

The trial continues.

Speaker defends MPs' role

Anne Perkins
Political Correspondent

THE Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, last night challenged Labour plans to change the way MPs work, delivering what amounted to a rejection of Labour's view of an MP's role.

Any change should recognise that voters thought MPs' main job was at Westminster, and not winning the next election in their constituencies, she said.

As Speaker, Ms Boothroyd is defender of the independence of the Commons. Her broadside against government plans to end Friday sittings and have all-day sittings on Thursdays will be welcomed by some Labour back-

benchers, who are alarmed at party headquarters' demands for high levels of constituency activity.

Ms Boothroyd, writing to the Leader of the Commons, Ann Taylor, who is in charge of modernising the Commons, said: "A change to sitting hours needs to be considered in the light of its contribution to improving Members' ability to discharge their duties both to the House and to their constituents."

In a four-page response to the proposed reforms, she emphasised her belief that MPs should be "scrutinising legislation, holding the executive to account and debating issues of national importance". Criticising the Labour whips' practice of sending MPs on "constituency weeks"

where they concentrate on building support for the party while Parliament is sitting, she suggested that Parliament should continue five-day-week sittings, with "occasional" weeks off for MPs to return to their constituencies.

She said sitting on Thursday mornings would lead to a serious conflict between standing committees, where government legislation is considered, and Question Time, which are one of MPs' best opportunities to find out what the Government is doing and why. She also warns that the public perception would be of lazy MPs.

A committee of backbench MPs is considering Mrs Taylor's proposals, which were published a fortnight ago.

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First response to the BSE crisis was impressive, but some financial deals were debatable. **James Meikle** analyses the official report

Scare that sent money up in smoke

THE BSE crisis, now thought to be responsible for the death of 27 people in the past three years, caused unprecedented uncertainty and fear in thousands of farmers, hundreds of businesses and millions of consumers, the National Audit Office concluded yesterday.

Eventually it might cost British and EU taxpayers more than £4 billion, and result in the culling of 8 million cattle, although the disease has been confirmed in only about 170,000.

The NAO report on the past two years of the BSE epidemic, which formally began in 1986 and should be over by early next century, comments "impressive results" by the then Conservative government and its agencies in seeking to protect human and animal health, reassure consumers, save the beef industry, and comply with EU demands.

It questions, however, some of the financial deals struck with farmers, slaughterers and animal renderers, suggesting that proper tendering and more accurate compensation might have saved money in the months after March 1996, when ministers formally acknowledged apparent links between BSE and new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans.

The Intervention Board, the main agency responsible for cattle culling, told the NAO its priority was to meet public and political concern over backlogs of cattle for slaughter, carcasses for rendering, and waste products for incineration.

The NAO highlights the tensions between political considerations, including EU conditions for the beef export ban to be lifted, and other advice, which has questioned whether some apparently healthy animals have to be slaughtered to protect the human food chain.

About 3.85 million cattle have died or been slaughtered since the first diagnosis in November 1986, most in the last two years. But another 4.25 million animals may be culled.

Among dilemmas the NAO raises for the Labour administration are how much longer farmers should be compensated for culled animals, how long beef from cattle over 30 months will be banned from sale, and how

Britain gets rid of the "mad cow mountain" of 500,000 tonnes of meat, bone meal and tallow, now stored around the country.

But the NAO recognises that ending the 30-month scheme, the most expensive of the anti-BSE measures — introduced because BSE has very rarely been found in animals that young — depends on protecting human health rather than reducing expenditure.

Such a move could only be contemplated if preconditions were met — "including a low incidence of BSE in cattle and low risk of infection; no further evidence of infectivity in tissues not included in spec-



'Compensation was too generous — at least for beef animals'

fied bovine material controls; evidence that BSE is no longer occurring in young cattle; and the incidence of new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans remaining low."

The report notes that the Over 30 Month Scheme was set up under pressure. But the impressive results, including the slaughter of 80,000 cattle a week by November 1996, were achieved "at considerable costs to the UK and European taxpayer, especially in the early stages".

Abattoirs were at first paid £7.50 a cow to slaughter cattle, despite the fact there may already have been room in the system to deal with the cull. By August 1996, this had been reduced to £4.1 a head and in July last year it was cut again to £2.2. The slaughterhouses have so far been paid about £94 million for killing the cows and another £78

million to subsidise the industry because it could not sell on carcasses for rendering into other byproducts.

Similarly, renderers, where there was a shortage of plants to do the work, received both fees for culling (nearly £100 million) and more than £150 million to compensate for the loss of byproduct trade. Fees were £105 per tonne at first, although they have dropped to an average of \$82.

The report says farmers benefited from compensation that was too generous — at least for beef animals. But adjustments to falling market prices and cuts and ceilings on the compensation rates had changed that. The average compensation paid per animal under the first 18 months of this scheme was £475.

The report suggests that some farmers deliberately fattened up dairy cows to get extra payments before weight limits were introduced, although the National Farmers' Union disputes this. Inaccurate calculations for compensation determined by the EU at first made it profitable for farmers to sell animals directly to abattoirs rather than using markets.

A separate selective cull of animals most at risk from BSE — born in the same year and within the same herds as confirmed cases — was introduced under the EU deal, which ensured some financial support from Brussels, despite Britain feeling it would have a limited impact on the epidemic.

Farmers got far more in compensation for these animals — an average £1,400 for a pedigree animal and £1,000 for a non-pedigree cow — because the scheme was compulsory, while the 30-month one was voluntary.

Much of the money spent by the Government (about half the £1.5 billion in 1996-7, for instance) is reclaimable from Europe, although some Brussels payments will not be completed until next century.

The NAO reports huge increases in staff during April 1996 and September 1997. The Intervention Board employed an extra 331 people, an increase of more than a third, while another 640 were employed by the Ministry of Agriculture or the Meat Hygiene and State Veterinary Services.

BSE: The Cost of a Crisis, Stationery Office, £13.75



Cattle carcasses are burned... the crisis may eventually cost EU taxpayers £4 billion, the NAO report suggests

PHOTOGRAPH: TONY MELVILLE

Death toll	
Number of cattle infected by BSE since 1986	170,000
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	2,382,000
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	1,256,808
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	772,396
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	1,574,000
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	920,000
Number of cattle slaughtered under the 30-month scheme	1,000,000

Dead cow mountain will finally be burned and returned to the land

Martin Walmerwright

THEY LOOK like gray granules, and may be equally unthreatening, but the security over the remains of slaughtered cattle is like something out of Northern Ireland.

Sealed doors, rigorous consultation with councilors and MPs and a range of other precautions surround the 12 warehouses at nine sites between Malpas on the Antrim coast and Wraggaton in Devon.

Known in the initial-dominated world of BSE as the "MBM mountain" (for Meat and Bone Meal), the dark brown heaps of rendered carcasses have

climbed to 325,000 tonnes in store, along with a smaller mountain of tallow, mostly from hests slaughtered under the Over 30 Month Scheme.

These were cattle which had reached 30 months without showing any signs of BSE or related symptoms, technically fit for human consumption but killed as part of the precautions triggered by the beef scare. Their carcasses were rendered, or ground up and baked, along with spinal material from younger animals slaughtered for human consumption, and animal material from sheep and goats.

Warehouses such as the neighbouring trio at Pres-

ton, Chorley and Longton in Lancashire were picked for MBM through tender to the Government's Intervention Board, which is dealing with the unprecedented operation. Diseased animals were sent for more prompt incineration.

To see the granules requires the presence of Meat and Livestock Commission officers and the breaking of seals. But in due course the mountain is expected to become part of Britain's daily life, as landfill, after incineration.

Jeff Rooker, the Food Safety Minister, said this week that contractors to burn the mounds and then send them ash for burial were expected soon.

Genetically altered crops 'could wipe out farmland birds'

John Vidal

SOME of the country's most treasured birds and wildlife could be wiped out if genetically modified (GM) crops are grown without more testing, the Government's advisers on nature conservation warned yesterday. The skylark, the linnet and the corn bunting — all of which live on farmland — could be at particular risk, they say.

Calling for a three-year moratorium on the commercial growing of the controversial crops, English Nature scientists called for changes in the rules governing their planting until more tests had been done on their ecological effects.

The move highlights a growing split between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, which want the early introduction of the crops, and the Department of the Environment and Transport, which is more cautious.

"More research is needed and existing research needs

to be completed before we can have a better idea of the possible effects of genetically modified organisms on our already hard-pressed wildlife," said Brian Johnson of English Nature. "The environmentally untested introduction of genetically modified organisms could be the final blow for species like the skylark, the linnet and the corn bunting."

Dr Johnson warned that the introduction of the crops could herald a profound revolution in British agriculture.

"It can effectively create novel life forms and has the potential to do so at a rate unparalleled in Earth history," English Nature's statement said.

A spokesman for the leading GM company, Monsanto, said yesterday: "These products have been tested and grown for 20 years. They are evaluated by seven scientific committees and four government departments in Britain. It's in our interests to make sure they are safe."

The call for a moratorium was backed by two of Britain's largest voluntary

groups, the RSPB and Friends of the Earth. Government environment bodies, including the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Northern Ireland Environment and Heritage Service, are known to support English Nature's position.

But English Nature said it was "certainly not" against the development of GM crops that benefit the environment. Some crops are expected to considerably reduce the need for pesticides and other chemicals. However, there have been confirmed reports that the crops could cross-pollinate over a considerable distance into other crops.

EN's call for caution comes at a crucial time for the chemical industry, which hopes to grow them widely in Britain next year, but is meeting considerable, and growing, public scepticism.

Mounting opposition from a coalition of consumer and environment groups culminated last weekend in five women being arrested in Oxfordshire for damaging a test site for Monsanto crops.



The skylark could be at risk from untested genetically modified crops. PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN BEVAN

News in brief

Register for nannies 'would not work'

CABINET Office advisers yesterday told ministers to reject calls for a national register of nannies and au pairs, for fear that it would create bureaucratic confusion without offering greater protection to children.

The Better Regulation Task Force, an independent group of advisers appointed by David Clark, the Public Service Minister, urged the Government to provide clearer guidelines for parents. Parents, it added, should be able to check out prospective carers by getting cheap access to police reports. But any attempt to license nannies and au pairs "would stand the risk of reinforcing a false sense of security" among parents who had to retain responsibility for their children's safety. *John Carol*

Posted injured in action

A POSTMAN who claimed delivering mail to homes with low-level letter boxes caused him back damage was awarded £184,500 (£26,500) to the Irish high court yesterday.

Parents, it added, should be able to check out prospective carers by getting cheap access to police reports. But any attempt to license nannies and au pairs "would stand the risk of reinforcing a false sense of security" among parents who had to retain responsibility for their children's safety. *John Carol*

Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness said the risk had been foreseeable and she looked forward to the case persuading authorities to act against siting mail boxes in low positions.

1m to camp in eclipse county

A DEVELOPMENT company is planning to offer camp sites for around a million people for next year's total eclipse of the sun in Cornwall. The county's eclipse co-ordinator has predicted that between 2 and 4 million people could visit the county to see the first UK mainland eclipse for 70 years. It will happen on August 11 for around two minutes six seconds on the line of totality, between Penzance and Falmouth.

Corfu check on death

BRITISH detectives are to fly to Corfu to investigate the death of a holidaymaker, Karen Murray, aged 19, from Birkdale, Merseyside. They are being sent at the request of the coroner holding an inquest into her death.

Miss Murray collapsed and died after complaining of stomach pains two months ago. Greek authorities blamed surgical swabs and clips found in her body but a Home Office pathologist's examination was inconclusive. The recovery of the swabs and clips is a primary reason for the trip.

Lack of verve cuts band

THE Verve, one of Britain's top bands, has been reduced to a four-piece after guitarist Nick McCabe pulled out of touring, the group said yesterday.

McCabe will not rejoin the Bittersweet Symphony hitmakers for any dates for the rest of the year and will miss two key British Festival dates, the V99 shows in Chelmsford, Essex, and in Leeds. A spokesman said: "Nick just can't face touring."

Train strike going ahead

A 24-hour strike by London Underground workers is set to go ahead from Sunday evening, RMT union said yesterday.

Church to review how its bishops are shortlisted

Madeline Bunting
Religious Affairs Editor

THE secretive process of appointing bishops in the Church of England needs to be made more open, the Rt Rev David Hope, Archbishop of York, told the General Synod yesterday, suggesting that vacancies could be advertised and candidates interviewed.

The Synod agreed to set up a working party to review the workings of the Crown Appointments Commission (CAC) — which draws up the shortlist of names for a bishop — from which the Prime Minister makes an appoint-

ment — but it stopped short of reconsidering the role of Downing Street in choosing church leaders.

In a heated debate on the last day of the Synod's meeting at York university, there were several calls for disestablishment of the Church, but the Synod heeded warnings against opening the question of Church-State relations when constitutional reform was on the political agenda.

Controversy flared last October when Downing Street broke the strict code of secrecy to let it be known that Tony Blair had rejected both names put forward for the vacant see of Liverpool.

Dr Hope urged the Synod to

leave alone the "essentials of the agreement between Church and State" and focus on how names came to the CAC and where information on them came from.

"Does the man himself have any opportunity to nominate a referee or indeed to contribute his own comments and reflections about his ministerial life and future?" he said. "Natural justice surely demands [this]."

The CAC is notoriously secretive. People under consideration do not know they are being discussed, they are never questioned and cannot put forward referees. No one outside the commission can know the date or venue of its

meetings, and members are sworn to secrecy.

"The system militates against men who are not cut from the same cloth; it shields away from people who might be described as prophets or having vision," said Christina Rees, Synod member for St Albans and a diocesan member of the CAC.

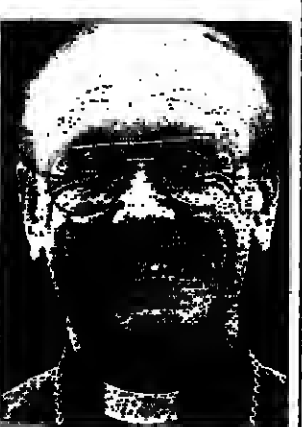
"More often than not, it opts for a safe pair of hands. The information is subjective, unverifiable and inconsistent... and the system is inscrutable and labyrinthine."

The debate reflected concern at the highest levels of the Church that a more open and accountable system was needed urgently. At the Feb-

ruary Synod, the Rt Rev George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, called for a review, and Christina Baxter, a CAC member, provoked controversy when she called for reform in a preface to the Church of England Yearbook.

Although the Synod heavily defeated a motion calling for the review to consider removing all Downing Street involvement in bishops' appointments, the fact that several speakers brought up the question of disestablishment shows the issue is gaining more acceptance.

The Rt Rev Colin Buchanan, Bishop of Woolwich, said: "Many people are baying for disestablishment."



Archbishop David Hope: 'Advertise jobs for bishops'

Australia's former 'big ideas' prime minister tells **Martin Woollacott**
Labour policies played no part in the rise of Pauline Hanson's party

Keating defends his legacy

THE former New South Wales club in Sydney, a 19th-century gentlemen's refuge overlooked by skyscrapers, is a strange home for Paul Keating. As treasurer when Bob Hawke was prime minister, and then prime minister himself, Mr Keating was famous for exhorting a sometimes reluctant Australia to face the future and not cling to the ancient and familiar.

It old things had served their purpose, like the monarchy, then it was time to be done with them.

This determinedly modern Australian is today housed in the mahogany-lined rooms of the club, part of which has become his offices. But they make an effective sounding box for his anger, which is that of a man who sees his handiwork threatened. Mr Keating was the author of most of the changes in Australia that are at the centre of the present political drama.

As treasurer he deregulated the economy, opening it up more completely to outside finance, investment and trade. As prime minister he emphasised reconciliation between whites and Aborigines and upheld native title rights.

As a maker of foreign policy, he worked to make Australia a leading influence in the region and in the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) grouping. As a shaper of Australian institutions, he embraced the idea of a republic.

The political crisis pivots on three of these issues. Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party is in revolt against the open economy. Aboriginal rights and Australia's "Asian" destiny are the republic, of Mr Keating's big ideas, is not controversial.

Spy and straight-backed, Mr Keating still sometimes looks like the boy politician he once was. His supporters call him an idealist, his enemies a certain fecklessness. All agree he has left his mark on Australia.

His career blossomed so early that he has been described as a "premature political veteran". Now, still youthful but with no way of



An Aboriginal boy plays on a beach in northern Queensland. Last week's compromise on land rights has infuriated Paul Keating. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GRAY

returning to politics, his energies have no obvious public outlet except to defend his legacy.

He resists the view that One Nation is a reaction to the political correctness of the Labour years.

He says: "The break with policy came not with Hanson. There have always been Hansonians in Australia. The break came because a prime minister gave de facto support to these ideas."

The equivocal reaction to Ms Hanson by John Howard, the Liberal prime minister who replaced Mr Keating

after a landslide victory in 1996, was deeply mistaken, or worse. "Fifty years of sympathetic assimilation have been sullied, in the eyes of our neighbours," Mr Keating says.

"It's a disaster for us. You know, you can go to people in Asia and you can say we don't like your milk tariffs... but you can't say, and by the way, we don't like your looks."

The impact of Hansonism on the country's Asian neighbours is compounded by what Mr Keating sees as the Howard government's inertia in

foreign policy. Labour, he claims confidently, played a leading role in Asia, was a steward of Apec and could claim partial credit for the rapprochement between China and the United States symbolised by last week's Clinton visit.

"The current government has adopted all of our policies on China and the region... but you've got to do it with heart and passion and belief. They have the words, but not the music," he says.

This means Australia is "losing authority and legitimacy" in the region. It lost its

chance to argue with Washington and the international financial institutions for a different approach to the Asian economic troubles. Mr Keating appears to believe the crisis in Asia could have been avoided had Australia been more active.

The compromise on Aboriginal land rights, which has enabled the Howard government to avoid an election in which One Nation might have achieved an influential position in the upper house, has particularly infuriated Mr Keating. Mr Howard's bill to limit native title was opposed

by half the senate, which felt it constricted rights that were already partial and subordinate to other claims on the land.

The vote was swung by an independent Roman Catholic of liberal views, Brian Harradine. Mr Keating attacked Senator Harradine in the Sydney Morning Herald this week, as well as Father Frank Brennan, a Jesuit who works with Aborigines, for letting the Howard government off the hook.

They may "imagine they have saved the country from a race-based election. In real-

ity they have saved Howard from paying the price for his folly, and made the Aborigines pay for it instead," he says.

Mr Keating adds: "We had to face the simple truth that there was a civilisation here when we came. That is what this is about — not some plot of the Labour government led by me to deprive Australian farmers of their land."

Mr Keating's version of events is put forward with characteristic force and flashes of wit. But it is, naturally enough, a version that suits his idea of his place in history. Even some of his supporters think he exaggerates his and Australia's impact in Asia. And most commentators believe today's problems have roots in the years of Labour rule.

But Mr Keating will not accept that the One Nation mood in the country is a consequence of his policies. He refuses to connect his defeat in 1996 with the restiveness of the electorate today. Yet there is a strong argument that a large number of voters, disturbed and in some cases disadvantaged by the rapid changes under Mr Hawke and Mr Keating, showed their disapproval of the additional burst of change under Mr Keating's leadership by voting him out.

Barely two years later some of the same voters may be deserting the mainstream conservative parties because they have not reversed or sufficiently slowed down those changes.

Mr Keating's vision of Australia, which is of a street-smart country maximising its chances in a difficult world, has been put out of focus by recent events. "When a small nation has inherited a Garden of Eden, your footwork has got to be exemplary," he says.

He is acerbic about those Australians who cannot or will not understand the need to be constantly alert and energetic. "The country thought they could have a smoko break from it all. Howard let them think they could just be comfortable and we could all just mill around for a while."

Mr Keating's quick smile flashes. "Unfortunately that's what Australia did."

Airport software hits hard landing

John Gittings in Hong Kong

SENIOR government officials stepped in yesterday after Hong Kong's new Chek Lap Kok airport descended into chaos.

Computer systems crashed, passengers missed flights as thousands of suitcases went astray, and ground cargo handling was shifted to the old Kai Tak airport, which closed on Sunday.

Anson Chan, Hong Kong's chief secretary, and Donald Tsang, the financial secretary, returned to the new airport to discuss the crisis with staff only 36 hours after they had welcomed the first passenger arrivals.

It was time to act, Ms Chan said, so that "small problems should not build up into big problems".

Many passengers were told by airlines to wait at home for luggage to be delivered. Bewildered people waiting for friends and relatives were advised to ignore the arrivals board, which was blank or inaccurate.

Cargo delays have hit at the heart of Hong Kong's export business, which relies on speed. HACTL, one of the biggest companies, said it would process outward cargo at Kai Tak before taking it by lorry to the new airport. Hundreds of lorries had queued at Chek Lap Kok as the cargo computer failed.

Human and technical errors caused the fiasco. Inexperienced staff misdirected luggage, and faulty computer software hit cargo operations. Inevitably, air bridges left passengers stranded.

The airport was formally opened last week by President Jiang Zemin of China and was used by President Bill Clinton. But public opinion is turning against an operation seen to reflect badly on the territory.

The airport shift was the biggest event in Hong Kong since its handover to China last year, but the boost to confidence is in danger of being reversed.

Bribery conviction threatens political career

Jail sentence for Berlusconi

John Hooper in Rome

SILVIO BERLUSCONI, Italy's leader and former prime minister, last night suffered a serious blow to his political career when a court in Milan sentenced him to two years and nine months in jail for bribing tax officials.

The verdict brought to a climax, if temporarily, a case that has had a bigger influence than any other on Italy's recent, turbulent political history. The accusation behind the trial brought down the media magnate's brief rightwing government four years ago.

The hearing spawned numerous controversies, including a claim that Berlusconi's aides had blackmailed the prosecutor in charge of the case into leaving the legal profession. That accusation led to a separate trial at which the charges were dismissed.

Ennio Amodio, Berlusconi's lawyer, said last night: "He told me this is a political verdict... and that there is no justice for him in Milan."

The tycoon politician will not go to jail immediately, or perhaps ever. Under Italian law, most convicted defendants are freed pending the outcome of appeal proceedings. They have an automatic right to two appeals which

can take years, or even decades, to be heard.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine the country being led by a politician who is a convicted criminal. It is particularly damaging that the judges agreed to a sentence just three months short of that called for by the prosecution.

Although he has demonstrated an astonishing capacity for survival against the odds, Berlusconi's position as the opposition's only visible candidate for the election behind the trial could finally become untenable.

Berlusconi had been charged with authorising four separate bribes to revenue guard officers in return for favourable tax inspections of his companies. The payments ranged from £19,000 to £47,000.

Evidence was produced at the trial to show that another defendant, an MP elected for his free-market Forza Italia party, had met Berlusconi soon after warning one revenue guard involved to keep quiet about the bribes.

Similar charges of bribing tax officials levelled at leading figures in the Milan fashion world were dismissed last year. The judges accepted evidence that money had been extorted rather than proffered. It was the second guilty

verdict for Berlusconi, who was convicted in December on the lesser charge of fraud in a 1987 film company deal and given a 16-month suspended sentence.

The inquiry leading to last night's verdict began while Berlusconi was in office in 1994. It was led by Antonio Di Pietro, the then star of the so-called Clean Hands team of anti-graft prosecutors.

The public learned of Berlusconi's involvement in November that year in the most farcical manner. News that he had been formally cautioned was leaked to the press while he was presiding at an international conference on organised crime.

In December 1994, Berlusconi, still prime minister, was called in for a day-long questioning at the main Milan courthouse. The blow to his prestige was irreversible. Later the same month, the separatist Northern League, which held the balance of power in parliament, withdrew its support and brought his coalition down.

The judges who convicted Berlusconi acquitted his brother and business partner, Paolo. But the court ordered that papers relating to evidence from a secretary and an aide of the tycoon should be referred to the prosecution with a view to perjury charges.



Striking parade performers at Euro Disney hold banners at the entrance to the amusement park in Marne La Vallée, east of Paris. They are asking to be classified as amusement park artists, which would give them a pay rise of 10-40 per cent. The two-week strike has been largely good-natured, with some strikers donning masks, but has pitted an American-style company against France's welfare-oriented culture. PHOTOGRAPH: REMY DE LA MALINIERE

Burmese democracy leader flees 'escorts'

AP in Rangoon

THE Burmese pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, was reported to be refusing to leave her car yesterday after a move to break out of her semi-official confinement at her home in the capital Rangoon, official sources said.

The military government said Ms Suu Kyi, head of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the party chairman Aung Shwe, another party official and their driver, were stopped by the local security officials at Shwe Mya Yar village.

Local officials noticed that the government security personnel who accompany Ms Suu Kyi on her rare trips were absent, a statement said. They asked her group not to proceed with their trip to Min Hla township, 52 miles north of Rangoon. The absence of the security team seemed to suggest Ms Suu Kyi had snaked away from her closely guarded residence, where she was under house arrest without trial from 1989 to 1995.

A military official said her group remained at the spot, 30 miles north of Yangon, the capital, yesterday evening.

The incident comes amid heightened tension between the military regime and the NLD, which recently demanded that the military allow the winners of a 1990 general election, in which the NLD swept to victory, to take their seats.

VW to compensate war slaves

Ian Traynor in Bonn

VOLKSWAGEN, Europe's biggest car maker and the owner of Rolls Royce, yesterday reversed decades of stonewalling about its second world war activities and agreed to compensate slave labourers who survived its factories in northern Germany.

The company, its board members' minds concentrated by the pending court action of 30 former slave labourers demanding compensation, announced it was setting up a "private aid fund" to be shared among those forced into its Wolfsburg factories during the war.

For years Volkswagen has rebuffed demands for compensation, saying individual companies were not liable for the war crimes and abuses perpetrated in Nazi Germany, that it was not the legal successor to the wartime firm which produced Hitler's "people's car", and that all claims should be directed to the German government.

Bonn resisted all claims for individual slave labour compensation, saying nothing could be done in the absence of a definitive peace treaty settling the war, and that compensation was made under Germany's agreements with other countries.

Survivors of slave labour, estimated at up to 10 million in Nazi Germany, were able to claim for imprisonment and health damage but not unpaid wages.

In recent years Volkswagen has opened its archives and authorised Hans Mommsen, the respected historian, to research its record.

He established that nearly two-thirds of Volkswagen's workers were foreign slave labourers by 1942 and dismissed arguments that German industry was compelled to use slave labour through Nazi political pressure.

"Volkswagen enjoyed considerable scope and many of its own initiatives led to the conclusion that it functioned

as an active accomplice of the regime," he said.

About 10,000 forced workers — Poles, Jews sent from Auschwitz, and Soviet POWs — were engaged in wartime arms production at Wolfsburg and, said Mr Mommsen, were forced to work in appalling conditions.

Yesterday's statement said the Volkswagen board had decided to award "humanitarian aid to individual victims forced to work in Wolfsburg in the years 1944-45".

The 30 surviving Hungarian Jewish victims suing Volkswagen are demanding 4,000 deutschmarks for every month they were forced to work for no payment.

Jamming devices cut noise pollution

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

FOR those who don't like sharing their sushi, concerts or train journeys with people having heated discussions on their mobile phones, Japanese entrepreneurs have come up with the ultimate countermeasure — mobile jamming devices.

With cellular chit-chat becoming more of a public nuisance every day, the government has proposed using jamming equipment to ensure that theatre and concert audiences are not interrupted by bleeps and electronic melodies.

Demand for the devices has come hard on the heels of a rapid growth in the market for mobile phones in Japan, which now has the second-highest number of users in the world, after the United States.

Among the companies cashing in on the desire for a little peace and quiet is Nikkodo, which supplies jamming equipment to hospitals and coffee shops. According to the company, the devices have proved extremely popular.

On a smaller scale, SIC, a Tokyo-based manufacturer, has produced a jamming device aimed at individual customers, which sells for

£276. With a range of just 10ft, it is ideal for putting an end to mobile-phone conversations on trains.

But regulators are concerned that such equipment could be misused. Last month they proposed a licensing system for the devices and said usage should be restricted to areas where mobile phones could create significant disturbance.

Mobile phone subscriptions in Japan have soared from 300,000 in 1994 to almost 30 million today, or one in three of the population. This is largely thanks to deregulation, which has pushed prices down almost to the level of ordinary

phones, and technical innovation, which has created the lightweight, powerful handsets now given free to new subscribers.

But noise pollution has become a major nuisance, prompting bans in many restaurants, cinemas and offices.

Tokyo's largest railway company, JR East, has introduced a campaign to dissuade commuters from using mobile phones on trains. But few people switch their handsets off before boarding, and a single ring is usually enough to send at least three people tumbling inside their pockets or bags.

Airport software hits hard landing

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President Franjo Tudjman: Reinstated the flag of Croatia's pro-Nazi Ustashe regime

As the boys from the Balkans prepare to face France in the World Cup semi-final tonight, **Julian Borger** reports on why the waving of the red and white banners is worrying human rights activists



Celebrations in Zagreb after Croatia beat Germany on Saturday — but in Bosnia ethnic Croatian fans attacked Muslims

PHOTOGRAPH: HERVÉ GRIG

Chequered past of Croatia's flag

THE fluttering of thousands of Croatia's red and white chequer-board banners will no doubt provide a stunning image at tonight's semi-final against France. But the mass display of patriotism is also likely to raise a shudder among many watching from the Balkans, who know the emblem's dark past all too well.

Patriotism has a seamy underside in most countries, but in Croatia it is very much on the surface. The colourful chequered board, the *shahovnica*, has an especially troubled history, much of it in living memory.

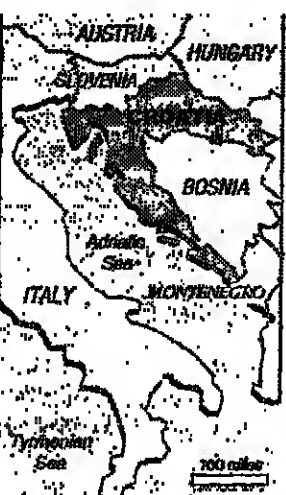
When it was selected in 1991 as the national emblem of a newly independent Croatia, President Franjo Tudjman — a historian — was well aware of its resonance. It was the symbol of Croatia's only previous experiment as an independent state: the pro-Nazi wartime regime of Ante Pavelic and his fascist

Ustashe movement. It is true, as Croats wearily point out, that the history of the *shahovnica* stretches back long before Pavelic to Croatia's origins as a medieval fiefdom. But the modern state revived many other trappings of the Ustashe regime, such as the kuna currency and the national anthem.

Mr Tudjman has never tried to hide his far-right sympathies. He once remarked: "Thank God my wife is not a Jew or a Serb."

During his spell as a historian, between his careers as communist general and nationalist president, he wrote a revisionist account of the Ustashe years, playing down the number of Jewish and Serb victims of the Jasenovac death camp near Zagreb.

This would be less important if modern Croatia did not have an appalling human rights record. Serb and Muslim minorities have often been targets of thuggery, and human rights activists fear



the new football triumphalism could make matters worse.

Ivan Zvonimir Cicak, the head of the Zagreb branch of the Helsinki Committee on human rights said: "I'm a fan of the Croatian team, but I

don't like to see the kind of manifestations we had after the Germany game — a lot of flags and shouting."

In some places there was more than shouting. In Bosnia ethnic Croats went on the rampage after Saturday's quarter-final win, attacking the homes of their Muslim neighbours.

In Croatia some fans chanted the name of Dinko Sakic, the Ustashe deputy-commander of the Jasenovac camp who is about to go on trial for war crimes.

Mr Cicak is also worried the Tudjman regime will try to use the national team's glory to consolidate its grip on power, strengthened by convoluted electoral laws and continual harassment of the press.

A spokesman for the ruling nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) recently threatened to call snap elections if Goran Ivanisevic won Wimbledon, while the Croatian team won the World

Cup. But the country's top tennis player has already faltered at the final hurdle, and in any case, Mr Cicak argues, "most of the Croatian people are not so foolish to confuse sport and politics".

Football has long been entwined with the Croatian national drama. Many football fans believe the war really started on May 13 1990, when Dinamo Zagreb supporters — "the Bad Blue Boys" — clashed bloodily with Red Star Belgrade's "Delije" thugs, led by Zeljko Raznjatovic, soon to become better known as Arkan, one of Serbia's most bloodthirsty warlords.

During that punch-up in Zagreb, in which 139 people were injured, Zvonimir Boban, the Croatian captain, became a nationalist icon by fighting back against the heavy-handed Serb-led police.

More recently football has reflected the beginnings of a popular backlash against Mr Tudjman's authoritarian

leanings. His whimsical decision to change the name of Zagreb's main club from Dinamo (too communist, he thought) to Croatia, using the Latin and English spelling rather than the local *Hrvatiska*, caused uproar.

"It's like renaming Arsenal Angleterre," commented one fan bitterly. Zagreb's "Bad Blue Boys" have not missed an opportunity to embarrass the president on the issue, hoisting their old Dinamo banners for the cameras covering the World Cup.

The cheek of the Zagreb fans gives some commentators hope that some good will come out of the flag-waving, as Croatia emerges as a sporting powerhouse — not just in football, but in tennis, basketball and handball.

Bruno Ogorlec, a media analyst, said: "We are a small country and like all small countries we have always had these inferiority complexes. I think all this success can alleviate some of the tensions."

1. Croatia invented the tie. Medieval Croat irregulars fighting for the French wore a piece of cloth knotted around their neck. The French adopted the fashion calling it the cravate, from Hrvat (Croatian for Croat).

2. The Croatian currency is called the kuna, meaning marten, a weasel-like creature whose fur was once widely bartered in the Balkans.

3. Dalmatian dogs were first bred for hunting in the Croatian coastal province of that name.

4. One of Europe's largest racist camps is at Koversada, near the town of Vrsar. Naturalism started in Croatia, on the island of Rab in 1932.

5. Three famous non-sporting Croats: Marco Polo was born in the Croatian island of Korcula, although the Italians dispute that this alone makes him a Croat. The Dalmatian coast was colonised by the Venetians at the time. A sixteenth century Croat, Faust Vranic, invented the parachute. Croats also claim he made the first parachute jump ever from a church tower in Dubrovnik. Tito was a Croat whose real name was Josip Broz. Most of his fellow countrymen have not yet forgiven him for creating socialist Yugoslavia.

News in brief

Pope urges flock to keep Sunday special

POPE JOHN PAUL yesterday appealed to the world's Roman Catholics to keep Sunday as a day of prayer and worship, *writes John Hooper*. The pontiff also tried to tackle low attendance at Sunday mass in some countries.

At a press conference in the Vatican, one of his aides revealed that only 6-10 per cent of Latin Americans were believed to attend Sunday liturgy, in a region often said to be offsetting the drift from organised religion in western Europe and North America. In Rome only 28 per cent of the people went to church on an average Sunday.

The Pope's 65-page discourse said: "When Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a 'week-end', it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see the heavens." It urged Catholics "to avoid any confusion between the celebration of Sunday, which should truly be a way of keeping the Lord's Day holy, and the 'weekend', understood as a time of simple rest and relaxation".

Judge dismisses reporter's plan to fight child porn

A JOURNALIST who said he downloaded child pornography from the Internet to write an exposé about how easy it was to obtain has been told by a judge that this is on defence, *writes Joanna Coles in New York*.

"A press pass is not a licence to break the law," Judge Alexander Williams told Larry Matthews, a veteran freelance reporter for National Public Radio.

Matthews was caught in 1996 with images of under-age girls engaged in sexual acts with other children. He said the First Amendment guaranteed Americans the freedom to possess any information, however offensive it might be to others.

After being told this was an unacceptable defence, Matthews' lawyer, Michael Statham, confirmed on Monday that the reporter had decided to plead guilty to one count of receiving lewd images and one count of sending images. He would then appeal against the ruling that barred a First Amendment defence.

Matthews is to be sentenced on December 11.

US army general could face court martial on sex allegations

RETIREd general of the United States army could face prosecution for conducting affairs with the wives of four officers under his command, *writes Mark Tran in New York*.

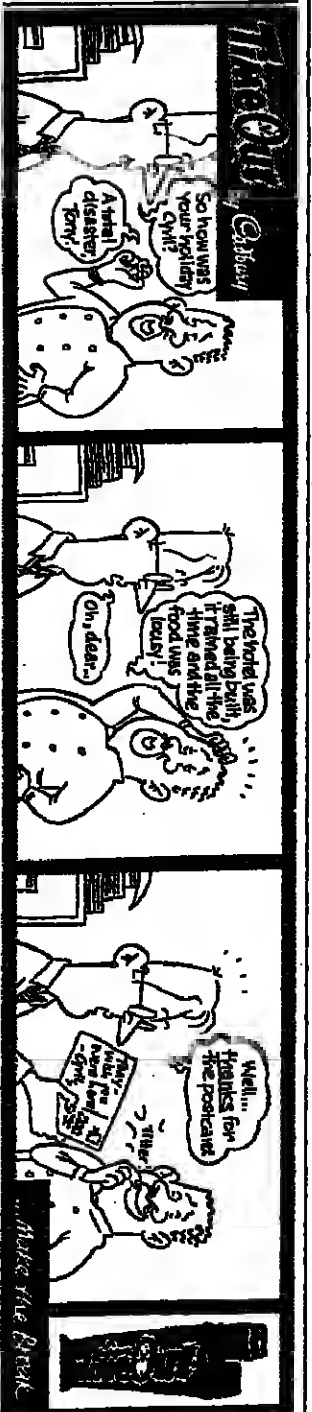
Major General David Hale is also accused in a Pentagon report of using government money to pay for international travel by one of the women. The report by the Pentagon's inspector general, Eleanor Hill, concluded that Gen Hale engaged in "inappropriate behaviour" as a military officer.

Gen Hale, aged 68, retired in February with the

army's blessing even though a criminal complaint had been filed by a subordinate's wife while he was serving in Turkey.

In March the defence secretary, William Cohen, ordered a review of the army's handling of the case, including the decision to allow Gen Hale to retire quietly four months after taking over as deputy inspector general.

The army has been criticised for double standards in its response to the accusations. Critics say senior officers have been treated leniently in sex allegations.



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Diary

Matthew Norman

THE Diary would like to lead the applause for another sure-footed media appearance by Peter Mandelson, the widely respected minister without portfolio. Mr Mandelson was interviewed on Radio 4's *The World At One* yesterday, moments after Dolly Draper had ceased explaining why he did nothing wrong (just a slip of the tongue, Gov, straight up it was). Listeners rang the BBC in droves to say how much they admired his loyalty towards Dolly, a close personal friend of his for years, whom Mr Mandelson generously portrayed as a braggart, a fantasist and an infantile show off. Also impressive was Mr Mandelson's seemingly unexpected tactic in painting the American reporter who broke the story in the *Observer* as a leeching activist "with an axe to grind". We've never heard that one before. We particularly didn't hear it about the American woman who was rude about Mr Tony Blair after interviewing him for NBC during the election. So then, that's an end to the matter, and let's hear no more about it.

DOLLY fans in Eltham should rush to the Children's Society Charity Shop in the High Street, where a solitary, lonely-looking copy of this seminal work Blair's 100 Days is on show. The book is available for £1, reduced from £7.99. (Very nice, deadpan piece of discrediting. You see, you can do it. PM)

In further good news for Mr Mandelson, he figures in a Tatler list of the 100 guests most often invited to society functions. Elton John comes top with 74.8 per cent of the parties, but Mr Tony Blair (10th) is the only politician to beat Mr Mandelson, who is 25th with 64.4 per cent. (I have asked Benjamin to fax you a line to the effect that, although highly flattered by my popularity, I attend very few of these functions due to my pressing Government and constituency duties. Please insert verbatim. Also mention the fact that Gordon Brown came in 1,798th place, with 0.00034 per cent. PM)

THE Diary would like to state (state categorically, PM) that there is no familial link whatever between Mr Mandelson and John Mandelson, a former Blair adviser who is now a partner in one of the lobbying firms involved in the row. Mr Mandelson's company held a party last week to celebrate New Labour's first year in power. Dolly was there, as was Jonathan Powell, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, his special assistant Anji Hunter, and various other Downing Street dignitaries. Mr Mandelson was not present, but the *Times* reports that "two influential ministerial advisers attended: Ed Owen (who works for Jack Straw) and only Wegg-Fresser". (Now you're being naughty again. It says Benjamin, not Oafy. Correct this, PM)

BENEDICT Nightingale, theatre critic of that same *Times*, writes about the item concerning his positive review of Andrew Lloyd-Webber's *Whistle Down The Wind* in which he failed to mention that his son Christopher is the musical director. Mr Nightingale tells us that his first review of the show, written two years ago from Washington when Christopher was not involved, was also admiring, and wishes to "reassure your readers that my notice would not have been different by a word if my son had not been involved with it". (What the hell's this got to do with me? Don't waste my time. PM)

THE British Medical Association has been meeting in Cardiff. Yesterday, doctors issued a warning that the NHS drug bill could quadruple because of Viagra, according to Radio 5 Live reporter Sharon Allcock. (Do we really want this snuff? PM)



Apologies, a touch of smoke — and a counter-attack. It's the best way

Jonathan Freedland



In the event of war, yield a little, attack the enemy and confuse the people. In the event of political crisis, apologise a bit, challenge your accuser and throw up a smoke-screen. That's what the spin-playbook says, and Labour's crisis-management of the cash-for-contacts affair has followed it to the letter.

First comes the touch of humility. Like old dance partners reunited for one more routine, Derek Draper and his early mentor Peter Mandelson were utterly in step yesterday — moving together to "plead guilty" to the charge that Derek was "brash and boastful" (Derek) and "a bit of a show-off" (Peter). It's such an artful move, pioneered by the master himself. Then Blair killed the Formula One affair the moment he went on television to apologise. The trick is not to admit the real charge, just the part of it you can live with. In the language of Love Story, New Labour has written a new rule: politics means having to say you're sorry — a little bit.

Next comes the counter-attack. This week that meant an assault on the *Observer*, which accused Labour courtiers of running their very own trade in cash-for-access. In a masterstroke, Alastair Campbell demanded that the paper release a tape of the key remark attributed to Downing Street aide Roger Liddle — the snatched moment at a cocktail party when Liddle allegedly promised to open the doors of the powerful for a man he presumed was a paying Draper client. In an instant, it was the *Observer* which was

on the defensive — facing an ultimatum from Downing Street which would expire at 11 am. (Why 11 am? Can Campbell have been unconsciously evoking the last, somber occasion on which Number 10 set that deadline? Like a latter-day Neville Chamberlain, Mr Campbell could tell the assembled lobby correspondents yesterday: "I have to tell you now that no such tape has been received and that, consequently, this country is at war with the *Observer*.")

The Campbell manoeuvre was inspired; it was bound to work. As Labour well knows, the *Observer* never once claimed there was a tape of the Liddle quotation. Other conversations had been taped, but not that one. By asking for proof they knew did not exist, the Government set up a neat little decoy. And, lamentably, most journalists covering the story fell for it. Not only did they spend the bulk of yesterday's news-cycle focussing on the *Observer's* credibility — rather than Labour's — but when the tape that never was proved non-existent several pronounced the paper's claims to be "crunching".

More Downing Street briefing last night on the personal history of the *Observer's* reporter was designed to finish the job. But it was the third stage in Labour's battle-plan which came easiest. When Derek Draper told the *World At One* he didn't know what he was meant to have done wrong or what rule he was supposed to have broken, he would have had many listeners nodding in agreement, if not sympathy.

For the entire row has been complicated, vague and obscure. For Labour, this is good news. Just as Bill Clinton benefited from the sheer complexity of the Whitewater affair — few Americans ever really knew what the president was accused of — so the fog of Westminster arcana enveloping the current controversy can only help the accused. But it's worth cutting through — and not solely to understand an episode which has been the bumpiest for this Government since Bernie Ecclestone. For what the ongoing row over lobbying reveals is a weakness at the heart of our very democracy.

Which is not to say that the revelations about Labour, even if confirmed in detail, are even close to the sleaze that so marred the last days of the Major era. In the murky world of Ian Greer, Neil Hamilton and the rest, lobbyists were selling access to politicians — with the politicians themselves taking a slice of the profits. There is no suggestion of that here.

MOREOVER, many of the lobbyists insist that their main role is to offer insight and advice, not a swipe-card to the inner chambers of government. Their relationship to politics is like lawyers to the law: they guide lay people around a baffling world. Perhaps a better analogy might be with journalists: these lobbyists are paid to develop contacts, pick up gossip and make a stab at interpreting events. The difference is that, while we as journalists are paid to tell the public what they do

in private — for clients who pay rather more than 45p a day.

For all the caveats, many voters will leave in disgust at the thought of a coterie of young men growing fat on their proximity to power. And that's really what lies at the bottom of the current scandal: a nebulous, instinctive "yuk factor" at the entire business of lobbying. Our problem is not that the rules of the trade may have been broken, but that the trade exists at all.

The political class will dismiss such feelings as naive — arguing that lobbying is an essential service industry of a democracy — but I think the unease is legitimate. It does seem wrong that a charmed few are privy to knowledge denied the rest of us — knowledge that can only be obtained with the help of paid experts. Most of us do not want our national life to be like the law — the exclusive preserve of a select caste of initiates lucky enough to be "in the loop".

This is a flaw in the system, not the people who work it — but there is action we can take. First, we need to stop boarding so much power at the centre. The more power is spread out, the more points of access are created — beyond the 17 members of Draper's charmed circle. Second, we need transparency, a clear window on government aided by a full freedom of information law, allowing us to keep our own tabs on those we hire to run the country. If we make both these moves, we can start lobbying government ourselves. And we can do it for free.

It's not fair to pillory me for a few regrettable boasts. We lobbyists walk a fine line

I'm sorry — a little bit

Derek Draper

LATE one Thursday I took a call from a representative of a major New York law firm, calling me on the advice of his sister, a high-level member of Clinton's White House staff. Or at least I thought I was. Greg Palast explained his associates needed "eyes and ears" in London. A real understanding of British politics and regulated industries was necessary. He floated the possibility of an £8,000 per month retainer, a hefty fee for any consultancy. I agreed to see him at his convenience and I wrote outlining what my firm GPC offers.

Over the next fortnight I met or spoke to Mr Palast five times. Once in the GPC offices and then at our annual reception, where among others, including the chairman of the energy select committee, Mr Palast met Roger Liddle. (Hardly secret or sinister: 200 people were present.) The last time we met was for a "celebratory" drink. "You're my man," he said. We had a glass of champagne at the Reform

Club. "Let's leave politics aside," he urged, "and just get to know each other."

But after a while he began his by now tedious questioning, which I put down to him being an American new to the UK. "Who did I know?" "How well did I know them," etc. It was probably then that I finally made the brain slugging remark: "There are 17 people who matter and I know them intimately." What I never said to Mr Palast (or indeed, ever, to anyone) is that these people are for sale. They are not. Despite the work I did with most of them when I was Peter Mandelson's researcher I have never asked, let alone received, any inside information, government document or favour of any sort. I wouldn't ask, they wouldn't offer.

This, I repeatedly explained at length, I thought Palast was being obtuse. I now know he was endlessly pushing for damning quotes for his piece. The lengths I went to get across to Mr Palast how UK lobbying works would be clear if the *Observer* release their tapes, which I challenged them to do. The lengths that Mr Palast went to entrap

me into offering "access or secrets for cash" would be equally clear. He got nowhere. Otherwise that is what we would have been reading about in the *Observer*, not my ill-advised brashness. Although I do feel embarrassed by how I come across, being a bit of a loudmouth is no crime, especially, if, as my friends will testify, it's often done tongue in cheek.

I do regret the embarrassment I have caused to the Labour Party

But I do regret the embarrassment I have caused to myself and to the Labour Party, to which I have been committed since the age of 17. I especially regret the embarrassment I have caused to people within it whom I admire and whose integrity is beyond doubt in all those who know them. But I am still left wondering what I am accused of. Yesterday the *Sun* said that I

had been nailed by the *Observer* for offering advance copies of speeches and selling lunch at Downing Street. I never done either, and even Mr Palast with his selective quoting and embellishments didn't claim I had.

I have felt in the last 24 hours that every real or imagined slur of the lobbying world was being heaped on my shoulders. But all I can do is try to disentangle things. Do lobbyists sell influence? No. But we do advise how a company can increase theirs. Usually this is humdrum stuff, drawing up a case, explaining political buzz words, identifying people who should be approached. "It's a fine line" I can hear Guardian readers cry. And you're right. But it is a line lobbyists tread every day. We do so pretty much in the public spotlight, with a ferocious investigative media and for major blue chip companies who wouldn't touch anything or anyone unethical.

The *Observer* were right to test whether there was anything untoward to the world of New Labour lobbying but when they found so little they should have accepted that. To

instead build up a conversation with Roger Liddle that, as they presented it, never happened and a few regrettable boasts by me about who I knew was simply not fair.

I feel as if I have been on public trial for the last three days of my life and yet no one has explained the charges. Sadly for Mr Palast, the *Observer*, and ironically, for me, he didn't come up with a real story.

The worst thing, though, is the worry that I have let people down — people whose politics I share and have worked for since I joined and fought a Militant-invested Labour Party in Manchester in 1987. I have never found being ambitious and successful in contradiction with supporting the Labour Party. I've made a lot of friends along the way (and they're shown their mettle this week) but I also made a few enemies. Politics (indeed life) is like that. They must have been having a whale of a time this week. But whatever happens to my job as a lobbyist or as a columnist I will still be there, fighting for what I believe in.

Canker in No 10

Polly Toynbee



THE rabid lobbyists, special advisers and power-brokers surrounding this Government are only outward symptoms of the real disease. Curiously, comment so far has focused on the surface boils and not on the sickness within. Draper, Liddle and the rest are neither powerful nor important — the stuff of marginal gossip. But inside the heart of Government all this springs from one virus, and its name is Peter Mandelson.

Many hoped that when Tony Blair took office, he'd thank his old friend for all he did, reward him with some fitting job and dispense with his dark arts. Like Prince Hal, Blair should have cast aside the companions of opposition who no longer become the dignity of office. His Mephistopheles may yet prove his undoing.

It is a measure of the fear Mandelson instils that serious political writers rarely finger him directly or analyse this over-mighty courtier who corrupts and distorts, sows seeds of rancour and dispenses favours. Impudent diarists may leave, Rory Bremner mocks and "Mandy" is taken in vain. But heavy-weight criticism from those genuinely in the know is thin on the ground. Why? Because to fall out with Mandelson is a dangerous game. His wrath is mighty and permanent, his writ runs deep and wide, through many of the press and far into the establishment.

He is the model for this flattery of young men (very rarely women) of all parties who are the new political caste. Politics is their whole life, as they glide effortlessly from student union to think-tanks and internships at the US Congress, breathing nothing but the foetid political air. For them, politics are simply the tools of power. There is no right or wrong, no ideology, not even "what works" in the real world. For them all that works is the selling of messages that get power for themselves and their master of the day. (Some slyly quite naturally from party to party, noting out where power is.)

Opinion polls are their only reality, psephological calculations the only truth. The *Observer's* charges against this coterie are less ones of substance than of gross presumption. Policies have not been warped — only the tarnishing impression given that everything can be fixed. And the icon of this nether world is Mandelson.

Why does Blair still keep him by his side? Because most Tories need at least one courtier on whom they depend utterly. Mandelson is trusted as he has no other source of power than his master, no base in party, cabinet or anywhere. He has no agenda, no policy other than to do his master's work and do it well. Campbell is the foghorn — Mandelson is the beloved.

MANDELSON'S charm is dazzling, magical. When he smiles, the room smiles with him. He entrances children, mesmerises matrons and magnates alike. At a birthday party I watched him dance with inspired grace, lithe and mercurial, delighting all with his infectious pleasure. Tony Blair was there and Gordon Brown, but not John Smith, then leader. He was not Smith's man. Indeed there was much whispered sighing in the room that if only Blair were leader... He is a loved uncle in the Blair family. His flattering, witty, easy company is a blessing when the going gets tough. We might all like a Mandelson close at hand. So long as he was on our side.

As a foe he is lethal, vindictive, vituperative and petty.

While savage against enemies or the many he despises — he is quick to take umbrage. The jokes hurt and he snarls back. His public persona on television is surprisingly calamitous, unable to flash that charm on camera, displaying instead a defensive querulousness, oddly stiff, like an irritable camel. Replying to accusers yesterday, he hit back at *Observer* journalism — nit-picking, forensicly quite clever, but missing the big picture. Puffed up with his master's power, he has offended too many, including old friends. He makes enemies quite needlessly.

How much of the supposed Blair-Brown split is Mandelson's fault? Most of it, directly or indirectly. Where Mandelson goes, discord follows. He is viscerally loathed by many Brownites, with good reason. To suffer the Mandelsonian sneer of contempt is quite enough to start a war. Had Blair put aside his old friend on entering Downing Street, he might now find relationships around him easier.

DOES the king know what harm is done in his name, the people always ask? It is part of Blair's Arthurian insouciance not to know. He is so certain of his own inviolability that he can sometimes surround himself with moral hazards, bad company and dangerous men, yet believe none of it touches his undoubted integrity. In the Ecclestone affair, he was more guilty of arrogant innocence than corruption. How could anyone dare think he would take such a decision on Formula One except on the basis of facts? And so he talks with Murdoch every week, meets him often, praises Sir David



English, prays with Paul Johnson — yet sees, hears and speaks no evil.

It is likely that the bad company Blair sometimes keeps comes from Mandelson connections. For Mandelson's social net spreads even wider, delighting knavishly in company that wishes nothing but ill upon his party. So he walks out with Elizabeth Murdoch and is a close confidant of Carla Povera, even as she organised grand parties for Jimmy Goldsmith's election campaign. All kinds of high Tories and louche *haut monde* denizens beam fondly at the name of Peter. Even Camilla. How far all this is from Hartlepool. But then he is equally intimate with John Birt, and goes shopping with him. Name anyone with power. Peter knows them. For any lobbyist, his address book on both sides of the Atlantic would be to die for. He is the most sought after man wherever there is power, money or social cachet. Why does he do it? What for? Is it just peacocking about, or is there political method in it? Maybe, maybe not.

One thing is certain, this social and political promiscuity does Blair harm. It beguiles Blair into thinking there is no difference between good and bad people, that consensus must include arch enemies. But wherever Mandelson goes, in good mood or in bad, he tends to damage Blair. There is decadence and danger here, an unspoken trading in borrowed prime ministerial powers, who best of tuncing his coat-tails are only grotesque parodies of their tutor. Cutting off these minions will not cut out the canker in the heart of Number 10.

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Turn off the access

Time to probe lobbying

WITH KING Billy's (disloyal) descendants massing in the fields round Drumcree, the Prime Minister had pressing things to do yesterday: his willingness to meet with Orange Order leaders is courageous and welcome. The maintenance of peace and order in Ulster is indeed a priority. But Tony Blair cannot be allowed to pretend, as he has before, that he is above the mêlée. The sooner he realises that the charge of peddling influence is not just another spin operation to be left to Alistair Campbell the better. The very identity of New Labour is at stake; suddenly its values look tarnished.

Yesterday the Government was spared the embarrassment of the House of Commons Standards and Privileges Committee's decision that Geoffrey Robinson had offended against the parliamentary code by not declaring all of his far-flung financial interests; that may come next week. It would be unfair not to suspend judgment. But in the meantime, it needs to be asked who it was appointed Mr Robinson without ensuring he was " squeaky clean " (if we may give that phrase a thorough dry-cleaning after it was soiled by the ever-bullying Gerald Kaufman)? Who is it who seems to believe that creating a climate in which British business prospers, creates jobs and makes profits entails a kind of free-for-all at Number 10, in which contributions to party coffers will turn the key in the lock? Who created such a damagingly ambiguous role for Peter Mandelson while condoning his peculiar style —

the quality of his judgment shown yesterday in his slightly ambivalent defence of the ubiquitous Derek Draper? The answer is the same Mr Blair who has largely dispensed with Cabinet government, and whose interest in challenging or cautionary advice from the Whitehall machine is strictly limited. His choice of friends is notoriously suspect. He cannot seem to see that a government with moral ambitions and aspirations to make Britain a fairer place, modern and better-governed, depend heavily on the qualities of those who surround him, run his errands, get through on his private line. To govern effectively, even with the limited social and economic ambitions of this administration, demands credibility. In recent days, the Blair administration has seen that credibility dented.

Things are recoverable. The system's checks and balances kick in. The Tories get themselves a cause, and are able, for once, to mount an effective attack. If backbench Labour MPs have an ounce of self-respect they will crank up the select committees (Public Administration, Public Accounts) and investigate the lobbying phenomenon which caused so much trouble to the last Government and which now threatens this. That off-repeated Campbell line that no offences have been charged to ministers is worth savouring. Those with positive policies to conduct and public to persuade — John Prescott, David Blunkett among them — should start saying just how damaging to their effectiveness is this association of lousie young men in and around SW1: the remedy is a better balanced Cabinet.

But the immediate prescription has to be a changed line for the choral ranks orchestrated by Mr Campbell. Mr Draper and the other hungry little worms may have been hatched from the chrysalis of New Labour. But they can be starved. If access is their

currency, bankrupt them. Let them live, or die, by the same rules which govern (rather well) the necessary dealings of civil servants and ministers with interest groups and their agents. If that requires Mr Blair to order a few months' self-denial by ministers and a few missed champagne receptions, is that really a high price for ensuring the Government's political priorities, especially peace in Ulster, are carried forward in more sanitary political conditions?

Don't raise rates

The economy is already slowing

THE BANK of England would be very ill-advised to raise interest rates yet again today as almost everyone seems to be expecting. There is growing evidence that the recession, already apparent in the manufacturing sector, is spreading swiftly to services. To kick the economy when it is already slowing down (as is the rest of Europe) could turn a cyclical slowdown into a full-blown recession. Interest rates have already been raised six times since Labour came to power. Since it takes up to two years before higher interest rates are fully effective, all Labour's increases have yet to impact fully on an economy that is already slowing down rapidly. If it takes so long before the effects are fully felt should the Bank not be thinking of a reduction rather than an increase now?

Members of the Bank's monetary committee must look more closely at the real world as well as their abstract mathematical models. The fact is the danger of recession is now much greater than that of inflation. The Bank is concerned about the latest 5.2 per cent rise in earnings, but this has been so inflated by City bonuses, the rush to beat

the clampdown on profit-related pay, plus technical changes to the pay index, that it would be wiser to wait before concluding that the wage volcano has erupted. Figures for wage settlements (excluding bonuses and overtime) are much more modest. The rise in price inflation to 4.2 per cent has been inflated by mortgage costs (the result of raising interest rates), seasonal food prices and the effects of Labour's first two budgets (reduction of mortgage interest relief, higher petrol costs etc). Strip these away and the increase is only 2.5 per cent.

Nearly all of the "worrying" part of inflation has been the result of government policies to curb inflation or to raise money. If the Bank continues to raise interest rates then — because of the importance they still have in wage negotiations — it could create inflation that would not otherwise have happened. One of the problems is that the monetary committee — unlike its counterpart in the United States — has a brief to worry about inflation primarily and not the real economy. Such terms of reference were a mistake, as was the Government's decision not to curb consumer demand through higher taxes. This put too much of the burden of curbing consumption on interest rates. If the Bank thinks it is being placed in an impossible position it should say so loud and clear — while leaving interest rates unchanged.

Tsar of the street

Tackle causes, not symptoms

A FEW weeks ago, an irreverent rough sleeper was interviewed on the BBC Today programme about his problems. His biggest complaint was the number of voluntary soup kitchen teams who kept waking him

up on his doorstep. It was impossible to get a good night's sleep. Whimsical it might have been but it involved a useful lesson: even voluntary organisations need to co-ordinate their services. For statutory services this is even more vital. For far from being over-supplied with support services, the homeless face more holes in the welfare state than any other group. Yesterday's rough sleepers' package from the Government's social exclusion unit won high praise from the pressure groups — and rightly so. It set an ambitious target (a two-thirds reduction by the year 2002); recognised the problem was more deep-seated than merely a shortage of hostel places, drastic though those cuts have been; and not only called for better co-ordination but produced four ministers plus the Prime Minister all pledged to the cause.

A cynic might say this government is in danger of creating more tsars than a Russian royal family. First a drugs tsar, now a street tsar. But if a central lesson is better co-ordination, then strong co-ordinators are needed. The street tsar will concentrate on London, but six other cities will be expected to appoint local co-ordinators. The Prime Minister talked of reducing the number of rough sleepers to zero. That is a daunting task, but one every civilised nation should aspire to. The solution is not to sweep them off the streets through a new criminal law — an option which the report leaves open once hostel places have been increased — but to tackle the root causes: the poor support for children leaving care, patients discharged from mental hospitals, and inmates freed from prison. The Prime Minister noted that only one in 20 rough sleepers is doing so by choice. One-third have been in care, a half in prison and a majority have some form of addiction or mental problem. Prison is not a solution.

Letters to the Editor

Orange order makes hash of it

ORANGEMEN see the decision to route their Drumcree march as a defeat of their historic rights. Will they see a triumphal march by the Catholic residents of the Garvaghy Road through a Protestant area as a reasonable celebration of the event? Ken Brock, Cleveland.

IN THE wake of the recent cannabis legalisation debate, I propose that marijuana be legalised in Northern Ireland as a pilot for the rest of the UK. Hugh Gallagher, Brentwood, Essex.

DRUMCREE: Glastonbury for hippos? Jean Oulipo, Brighton.

RE Leo Baxendale's query (Letters, July 4): the Edinburgh, an early eighties' anarchist punk band from Edinburgh, had a song, Exploited Army, with the lines "We're the exploited Army don't try and mess". This chant was transferred from Exploited concerts to the Scottish football grounds and thence to England. Sam McCartin, London.

JOHN Alley is wrong (Letters, July 6). I had to pay the £97.50 licence fee to watch five hours of the Test match. His mother had the option of the cricket, another BBC TV channel, or five excellent BBC radio channels. We have both had value for money. J Walker, Herne Bay, Kent.

THOSE of us who do not subscribe to Sky or watch ITV are forced to pay some of their costs (Letters, July 7). Advertisers are paid for from the profits on the things we buy. Dave Stretch, Manchester.

The cost of Dollygate

DOLLYGATE has thrown much needed light on the shadowy Progress magazine (People who know people, July 6). We now know it was founded by Peter Mandelson's confidant, Derek Draper which, of course, would be small change to a man on £200 an hour. But this is the magazine that was sold to party members as the successor to Labour Active, an in-house publication. It is sent uncollected to party activists at home.

I often wondered how Draper seemed to get hold of membership lists despite the Data Protection Act. But this would be no problem for a man who is able to get advance notice of the Government's spending plans. Pete Williams, Labour Party branch secretary, London.

It appears New Labour is more than happy to sacrifice Mr Draper in the hope we don't look too closely at what his hragrag has revealed. It is difficult to explain to people outside the party that the rise of New Labour has been a process of closing down democracy. Party members now have little or no say in policy, and selection of candidates is designed to exclude independent voices. We look on from the outside as a metro-

politan clique take over the democratic process. If this sounds familiar, it is. This is exactly the path that the Conservative government took. The 1997 general election result was in part a rejection of the sleazy politics of the eighties and nineties. If New Labour cannot prove that it is about clean government, it will not just be the career prospects of Mr Draper that are affected but people's belief in democratic government. Robert Smith, London.

THE New Labour government accuses your sister paper the Observer of "circulation building" as if it is automatic proof of perfidy. But I don't recall Mr Murdoch's Sun being lambasted for circulation-building when it switched support from the untastefully unpopular Tories to support for Blair in the election. Nor were his editors "called to account" for the recent attack on Blair.

What is this notion of "perfectly proper lobbying" what has any kind of paid, inside-track influence got to do with democracy? Don Hoekins, London.

WHEN I was chair of Vauxhall Labour Party branch, Derek Draper told me

"there was no room in the Labour Party" for people like me because I suggested that we should retain something of Clause 4. I feel the time has come to return the compliment. Doesn't the Labour Party have a rule that anyone who brings the party into disrepute should be disciplined? We should be seen to be at least as quick at throwing out arrogant, self-serving entryists of the right who tarnish the image of our party as we were at expelling members of the hard left. Fiona Campbell, Minchinhampton, Glos.

YOU report that "the country is split over whether Britain is still a 'snobish' society" (Britain really is cool, poll says, July 7). Perhaps you answer that question yourself two pages later when you describe how Derek Draper has made "a long and ambitious slog from a modest house in unfashionable Chorley". Geoffrey Wheatcroft, Bath, Somerset.

WAS 18 when I first met Derek Draper — he was behind the Labour stall at the Rushmore College societies' fair in 1988. Five minutes later I joined the Liberal Party. Chr Tim Farron, Leyland, Lancs.



How we ape our ancestors

RAYMOND Dart's theory of evolved human aggression may now be revealed as mistaken (Theory that war is in the genes is light of fancy, July 6). However, biology is not on the side of those who seek passivity in our origins. Our dentition is carnivorous, meant for tearing flesh. Also, new studies of our primate cousins, the chimpanzees, reveal them as weapon-wielding murderers, not the placid tea-drinkers of commercial. Scientists also believe that since many australopithecine skulls are smashed on the left side, ancient primates were right-handed. This supports the Clarke-Kubrick hypothesis in 2001 that human manual dexterity evolved from handling tools.

We should accept our genetic inheritance, then use our intelligence to make the most of what may have been useful on the African savannah in the pleistocene, is now counter-productive. It once made sense to kill, now it makes sense to live in harmony. Peter Stockill, Middlesbrough.

AGGRESSION is an instinctive response to a perceived threat. But the intelligent animal learns to inhibit

aggressive impulses in the interests of self-preservation. So what our ancestors may have done is irrelevant. Our evolved intelligence allows us to recognise that malevolence is stupidly selfish and benevolence sensible selfishness. Simon Young, London.

NOT in Sun City but in the arid, hot, dry lands of the creature holding the key to why we differ so from gorillas (Scientists reject racial view of origins, July 6). Only the penguin shares our upright bipedal stance. This has long been recognised as supporting the aquatic ape theory, ie that we had an evolutionary phase paralleling that of sea mammals.

But why are our heads perched on top of our spines, unlike sea mammals where the spine enters the back of the skull? Penguins tell us. They have been around for 45 million years, following their semi-aquatic, semi-terrestrial lifestyle. Perhaps as adaptations to rising sea and lake levels, we evolved specifically as a semi-aquatic, semi-terrestrial creatures — horizontal at sea, upright on land. Neil Hornsby, Sutton, Surrey.

On fathers' rights (and the purpose of knicker elastic)

DOLLY Toybee allows a few ambiguities through in her piece on fathers' rights (July 6). "Parental responsibility" as fathers' rights are called in law: parental responsibility is a legal concept which mothers have automatically, and anyone else (fathers included) can apply for, either from the mother or, if she does not agree, through the courts. When my daughter's father and I registered her birth (together, though unmarried) five years ago, nobody bothered to mention that he would have no legal responsibility for or to her if I fell under a bus.

"Mothers are appalled that a one-night stand father might be tied to her forever". Again, so are some fathers appalled by some one-night stand mothers. This could be an argument against one-night stands, or against not getting along with people whom you hardly know (hardly knowing each other can be a blessing in

these circumstances, as you have nothing to hate each other for yet). But most of all it is an argument against sex and nature, and therefore facile. Sorry parents, but you are tied together forever, however loose, uncomfortable or inconvenient those bonds might be. You have a child, and a child comes from, and has a right to two of you. Louisa Young, London.

So "women need stronger knicker elastic" do they, Mr President of Families Need Fathers (Letters, July 7)? Presumably to catapult you well away from their children. I've always suspected that Families Need Fathers were little more than a whingeing group of men deprived of their "sexual rights by marriage". Hardly in the interest of the child. Ella Clark, Brighton, East Sussex.

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Lobby fodder

Mark Steel



NEW Labour should just admit that they made a promise before the election, but didn't have room for it in the manifesto. Which was so as to avoid alienating Middle England. "We pledge that for the whole five-year term of Parliament, we will maintain the Tories' corruption levels." Then they could clear all this up, simply by saying:

"We made a commitment to the British people to be involved in scandals with shady businessmen on a regular basis and we intend to stick to it."

New Labour say the current scandal isn't about them, but about one lobbyist. But that lobbyist could operate because there's truth in his claim that in the Government "there are 17 people who count". Especially as amongst the 17 only six have been elected by anybody. And one, Roger Liddle, stood as an SDP candidate and didn't get in.

So when teachers are explaining the parliamentary system to their pupils, they should say: "We live in a democracy. Which means that to get to a position where you can run society you have to stand to be elected as an MP. Then you have to lose this election and be put in charge of Tony Blair's policy unit." Lobbyists have only to find ways of influencing one of

these 17 people and they become worth paying. Which is why they do whatever is necessary to keep in with the 17.

For example, Derek Draper, the lobbyist at the centre of the current scandal, says his column in the Daily Express was vetted each week by Peter Mandelson. Which must have made it the dulllest column in any paper, full of thoughts like: "I felt as sick as the next man when David Beckham was sent off against Argentina. But then I cheered myself up by remembering that this week another two poles are being slotted into the Millennium Dome, which will make us as proud of Britain as any Michael Owen goal."

New Labour gets embroiled in these scandals because they believe their own rhetoric. They're convinced that they arrived in office not because of a massive mood for change, but through being spun into power by 17 people

who can play the media. Lobbying, and the scandals which come with it, fits their style, because to them opinion is swung by intrigues, factions and whispers in private meetings.

Which is why it must puzzle them that a poll in yesterday's Guardian showed that 68 per cent of people still believe that Britain is a class-ridden society.

How do New Labour intend to solve that? Maybe the 68 per cent will all get a visit from a spin doctor who'll tell us: "Listen, I've had a word with Jack Straw and he assures me it's a thing of the past."

asked workers to be grateful for £3 an hour.

This was the problem with the campaign for the minimum wage. It wasn't ambitious enough. Instead of politely asking for £4.30 an hour, the unions should have said: "Look Blair, our security guards and office cleaners don't get out of bed for less than £250 an hour. Either they stuff their pockets with 10K a week or it's no deal, grinning boy."

And he'd probably have said: "Ah, now this is a language I understand." The leaders who make New Labour's decisions are proud to be guided not by principles or ideas, which makes them susceptible to being persuaded by anyone who turns up for a private meeting to lobby their own cause. Lobbying is by its nature corrupt, as it is only available to the rich. To return for influence, lobbyists can offer prestige, money, and

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FinanceGuardian

Liddell threat to advisers

Rupert Jones

THE Government yesterday threatened to shut down the £20 billion independent financial advice industry if it does not speed up compensation payments to victims of pensions mis-selling.

In an unprecedented attack, Treasury economic secretary Helen Liddell said the future of the sector had been called into question after its pitiful progress in clearing up the multi-billion pound scandal.

She also warned the public to be "very careful" when using one of Britain's more than 20,000 independent financial advisers.

"If the IFA sector fails to put its house in order... it will not only call into question the viability but possibly the desirability of the current industry structure," said the minister, after summoning industry representatives for a dressing-down.

Mrs Liddell's broadside represents the toughest action so far in a campaign by the Government and regulators to ensure justice for the up to 2.4 million people mis-sold a pension between 1988 and 1994.

Recent figures show that while many of the 41 worst-offending companies have now resolved 80 per cent of their cases, several leading independent financial advisers have cleared up less than 50 per cent.

At the bottom of the table is DBS Management, Britain's

IFAs that could be shut down



DBS Management
□ Britain's largest network of independent financial advisers, with 1,800 firms and 2,800 advisers; based in Huddersfield.
□ Turnover about £140 million.
November 1997 announced slump in first-half profits from £2.7 million to £478,000. Had devoted £4.5 million to mis-selling review.
□ In September fined £425,000 by the PIA for failures linked to mis-selling.

Countrywide Independent
□ Britain's second largest network with 1,500 advisers and about 800 firms; based in Witney, Oxfordshire.
□ Fined £250,000 in February 1998 in connection with the mis-selling scandal. Had failed to properly identify which cases should be reviewed and did not check accuracy of information provided by members, said the PIA.

Financial Options
□ Described as third largest IFA network, with 270 member firms and 550 registered advisers; based in Salford.
□ Turnover for 1997: £26.5 million.
□ Fined for poor handling of the mis-selling clear-up; £250,000 penalty shared between two subsidiaries, Financial Options and Investment Options. It did not devote enough resources to carrying out mis-selling review.

largest IFA network, which has completed 27 per cent of its case load and paid compensation to only 124 people.

Mrs Liddell said that her patience was exhausted by the lack of progress, and by the fact that many IFAs "have chosen to blame everyone except themselves".

IFAs make much of their impartiality, but the reality was that all too often the customer is neglected, she added.

"In my opinion, people

should think long and hard before using an IFA," Mrs Liddell said.

"My recommendation to anyone thinking of taking advice is to check out the IFA thoroughly."

Among those summoned to Whitehall were DBS, Countrywide Independent and Financial Options, the three largest IFA networks, which between them have almost 5,000 individual advisers located across the country.

Around 53 per cent of all financial products except mortgages and investment trusts are sold through IFAs. Mrs Liddell did not spell out what action could be taken to restructure the industry, although the most likely option would be to end the system of "polarisation" which splits advisers selling products such as life insurance and unit trusts into two camps.

They must either give completely independent advice,

choosing products from all those on the market, or act as representatives selling just one company's products.

This system has been in place since 1988, and with the Government engaged in financial services regulation reforms, it has the chance to make sweeping changes.

But industry body IFA Promotion said that scrapping polarisation would be a retrograde step, and would "take us back 10 years".

Prior to the current regime, "effectively anyone could sell anything," said Ann-Marie Martyn, IFA Promotion chief executive.

Without an IFA sector, the public would be a lot worse off, said David Stewart, group managing director of DBS. The majority of mis-selling cases were through salesmen working directly for an insurance company where there was no element of independent advice.

The IFA Association, the major trade body, said it was "furious at the way perfectly honest businessmen are being paraded in this way".

Notebook

Who next for the grand alliance?



Alex Brummer

THE STRATEGIC alliance between the London Stock Exchange and Deutsche Börse is a signal event for both the City and the European project. Until now the impression has been that London and Frankfurt have been in a fight to the finish to establish hegemony as Europe's financial centre.

There has also been an assumption, particularly among the Eurosaxon fraternity, that London could prosper more as an off-shore financial centre — away from the heavy hand of the European Union and Commission — than as part of the core.

The Stock Exchange under the direction of its chief executive Gavin Casey has sensibly recognised that going it alone was never a realistic strategy: the futures market alone has already been exposed to those dangers. A common trading platform between London and Frankfurt is a pragmatic development which will provide the big fund managers with a readily accessible euro market in Europe's top 300 shares.

The concept of a euro market will mean that new companies coming to the market will not need to make the same choices about a London versus Continental quote as was the case with Alstom in Paris recently. The local markets will remain autonomous which is logical for London, where the volumes and number of companies quoted is so much larger.

The new arrangement, intended to operate from the birth of the euro area, on January 4 next year, also recognises the changing nature of European capitalism. A series of privatisations in Germany and the untangling of inter-company shareholdings has meant that the Dax has been shifting towards the Anglo-Saxon model. This has made an alliance more alluring with the tantalising expectation that others, including France, will have no alternative but to sign up.

Much has still to be decided, including the operating system for the trading platform, regulation and the constituent stocks.

Although it is a fair bet that London's Eurotop 300 — which already exists — could become the dominant index. That will also be critical for hedging and futures operations. The deal also means that the City is more than ready to pass Gordon Brown's financial services test — one of his five criteria for Britain's entry into EMU.

Rover switch

ONE manufacturer clearly less than enamoured with the UK's status outside EMU, where

the pound remains uncomfortably strong, is Rover — the BMW-owned car company. Whenever ownership is switched overseas there is always the risk that the new proprietor will grow cool about its investment.

BMW always intended to use the UK, where Rover has just under 10 per cent of the car market, as a supply point for Europe, using a skilled and flexible labour force — said lower rates than on the Continent — to take on the competition. That ambition appears to be in place and, as yet, BMW which thinks long-term, is not cutting jobs, production or future investment here.

Sensibly, it is considering buying in components from Europe and further overseas, to keep down the cost-base of the group. BMW's policy of keeping down the cost-base of Anglo-Saxon capitalism has been somewhat dampened, no doubt, by the battle for Rolls-Royce Motors, where its "exclusive" deal was overturned and German mass-market rival VW was allowed in as an over-bidder.

The timing of the Rover demerger on components and the warning over the pound comes ahead of this week's meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee. The effort by industrialists to sway the MPC will be given further edge today by the engineering employers, which will provide the big fund managers with a readily accessible euro market in Europe's top 300 shares.

The MPC's job is meeting the inflation target, but it has shown sensitivity to the real economy and that may be more necessary now than at any point since it began operations just over a year ago.

Worldwide goals

AMONG the most telling criticisms of the BBC in recent times has been the lack of transparency in the accounts, which has made it virtually impossible to track how its investment in commercial activities is being funded, the worth of these businesses and their returns. Such clarity is deemed as necessary at a time when it is planning to invest heavily in new commercial and digital services and to exploit aggressively the BBC brand.

It is understood that when the BBC's new annual report emerges next week, with plans to invest up to £1 billion in extending the corporation's activities, the accounts of BBC Worldwide will be broken out as a separate document for the first time, giving an impression of what is going on commercially, aside from the mainstream activities that are funded by the licence fee.

The new clarity has to be welcomed and viewed as a strong riposte to those who believe that taxpayers' funds are being squandered or that the BBC, as a subsidised broadcaster, is competing unfairly in global markets.

It will also allow investors have curious investment bankers scrambling to see what value can be put on BBC Worldwide and whether it is a suitable candidate for the new public-private partnerships.

Virgin takes reins at Our Price

Roger Cowe

CONTROL of the music retail business, Virgin Our Price, yesterday passed to the Virgin Group, which agreed to pay WH Smith £145 million for its 75 per cent share.

The deal brings the Virgin retail formats together in chairman Richard Branson's empire for the first time and completes the disposal programme begun by WH Smith last year.

He said: "The prospects of Virgin's retail and cinema-brands working together is particularly exciting."

The Virgin Megastores in Japan continue as part of a joint venture, but Virgin bought out its other music store partners last autumn.

Simon Burke, chief executive of Virgin Entertainment Group, said the retail operations, including the part-owned Virgin cinema chain, were the most visible face of Virgin for most consumers.

"More people come through our doors than fly the planes, take the trains or buy the Peps," he said.

He will split the Virgin Our Price operation, which had been created after WH Smith's acquisition of a half-share in the UK Megastores in 1992.

Virgin will operate the 229 Our Price stores as a separate chain with its own management, independent of the 88-strong Virgin network.

Mr Burke, who ran the combined chains for WH Smith until last year, said splitting the two chains had saved money but damaged the business. "There were cost benefits but Our Price lost some degree of focus," he said. "It has been a fairly static business for six or seven years."

Virgin had retained a quarter of the shares after selling a half-share of its UK Megastore network to WH Smith in 1992.

WH Smith has been restructuring since the abortive takeover move by Tim Waterstone last year.

Crumbling currencies



An Indonesian woman is helped after fainting in the long queue for cooking oil, an increasingly expensive staple in Jakarta. PHOTOGRAPH BY PIPPA LISHAWATI

IMF acts to head off Russian devaluation

Charlotte Denny

PROMISES of a fresh cash injection from the International Monetary Fund failed to quieten nerves in Russia yesterday as investors dumped shares and government bonds.

The Russian government said that negotiations with the IMF for an emergency loan of \$15 billion (about \$3 billion) to shore up the crumbling rouble should be completed by the end of the week.

The IMF's managing director Michael Camdessus warned, however, that international aid would provide "only temporary relief" to the beleaguered economy. The interest on Russia's debt costs the government \$6.6 billion each month and investors fear it will be tempted to de-

Growing ranks of unemployed count cost as Indonesia slides into first recession for 30 years

CRIPPLING interest rates and the rupiah's spectacular collapse have sent Indonesia into its first recession for 30 years, writes Charlotte Denny.

Output shrank by 16.54 per cent in the second quarter of the year after falling by 6.2 per cent in the first quarter, according to Indonesia's Bureau of Statistics. Economists define a recession as two successive quarters of contracting output.

The numbers are a confirmation of the pain experienced in the past year by the country's swelling ranks of unemployed and its largest corporations, as the rupiah lost more than 80 per cent of its value against the US dollar.

value the rouble to cut its \$200 billion liabilities.

Moody's, the international credit rating agency warned that the country might need

up to \$20 billion from the IMF to stave off a default on its debts — a move that could wipe out the credibility with investors that Moscow has

built up since the collapse of communism.

"Moody's has a very low rating on Russia's domestic government debt... close to

the bottom because there is a risk it might not be possible to roll over that debt," David Levey, of Moody's, told Reuters. He also warned that Russia's troubles risked spilling over into eastern Europe.

In a separate knock to investor confidence, another foreign company pulled out of bidding for the last state-owned oil company, Rosneft, a deal which the government had hoped would raise \$1.6 billion.

As trading floor gloom spread, share values on the benchmark RTS stock index dropped by 9 per cent at one point before recovering to finish 4.5 per cent down, at its lowest level for two years.

"There is a feeling of desperation," said Artym Korkoff, a trader at the Moscow brokerage Tantieme. "People are getting out at any price."

This is the small print from the credit card advert that earned a landmark rebuke

Cardholder must be aged 18 or over. Applications subject to credit checks. Interest rates and charges: Standard Variable Rate of 12.99% APR. Monthly fee of £3.99. Annual fee of £12.99. Credit limit of £1,000. Repayment: Minimum monthly payment of £5.00. Default interest rate of 24.99% APR. Late payment charge of £6.00. Cardholder agrees to indemnify the bank for any loss or damage caused by misuse of the card. Bank reserves the right to vary terms and conditions without notice. Offer valid until 31st March 2000. See back of card for full terms and conditions.

Don't try to hide devilish detail in tiniest of type

Tony Lawrence

THE Advertising Standards Authority has condemned small print in an Alliance and Leices-

ter advert in a ruling that acts as a strong warning to banks, building societies and insurers which try to hide unattractive conditions and legal warnings behind typography.

The advertising watchdog said "the print was difficult to read" in the credit card advert which appeared in most national newspapers.

The adjudication is a landmark decision — the first time the ASA has ruled against an advert from a national financial services company on print legibility grounds.

It had previously rejected all but one of the many complaints it receives each month about small print, only upholding an objection against a fringe lender.

The ASA told complainants it applied a "common-sense test" to see if someone with normal eyesight could read the print in a normal time.

Obviously the Alliance & Leicester advert, which was prepared by an in-house team after the bank dismissed its previous advertising agency, failed this test.

The sizeable display advert was headlined "The money back credit card. It makes you money every time you use it". The main text was surrounded by a thick black border.

style and type size that could be easily overlooked were the essential conditions. This section, occupying a small fraction of the space, contained more words than the body of the advert.

Included were vital information and specific conditions relating to the special promotional interest rate prominently displayed in the main text.

The ASA ruling stated: "The print was difficult to read because of its small size and because it appeared outside the borders of the advertisement, read-

ers were likely to overlook it."

The Alliance & Leicester, which has withdrawn the advert, claimed to be "mystified" by the adjudication. It said rival financial services companies including Goldfish credit cards, Lloyds-TSB, Scottish Widows and Yorkshire Bank all use similar typography and have not been condemned.

The ASA decision sets down a marker which other financial services advertisers will ignore at peril of having a complaint upheld and being forced to change their advertising style.

GEC poaches from rival Bae

David Gow

GEC yesterday celebrated a coup by poaching Mika Donovan, a senior executive at its arch-rival, British Aerospace.

Mr Donovan, 45, has resigned only weeks after being appointed group managing director of Bae's growing defence business — which is competing with GEC to win a £1.5 billion Army contract.

Both companies confirmed Mr Donovan's move last night but GEC refused to comment on his new job. Sources at Bae said there was nothing sinister in his departure.

Mr Donovan, who has previously worked closely with

Lord Simpson, GEC's managing director, was in charge of several key Bae divisions, including joint ventures with France's Sema in naval systems and Matra in missiles as well as the wholly-owned Royal Ordnance and recently-acquired Siemens Plessey in defence electronics. He also led Bae's Sika International, a joint venture with US defence company Lockheed Martin, which is bidding to develop the new tactical reconnaissance armoured vehicle Tracer for both the UK and US armies.

Tba Sika consortium, which includes the British defence manufacturers Vickers and Alvis, is pitted against a rival Lancer team headed by GEC which embraces GKN and two American firms.

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Cyprus 0.848	Ireland 1.738	Norway 12.31	Switzerland 2.432
Denmark 11.09	Israel 0.54	Portugal 255.18	Turkey 423.230
Finland 9.572	Italy 2.157	Saudi Arabia 6.04	
France 8.678			

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London and Frankfurt team up

Market rivals go for new Big Bang

Jill Treanor

LONDON and Frankfurt yesterday called a truce in their fight to be Europe's dominant financial centre by taking the first steps towards the creation of a single stock exchange.

In a move expected to compare with the Big Bang which revolutionised the City in the 1980s, the Stock Exchange and Deutsche Börse announced a groundbreaking "strategic alliance".

The two exchanges are forming a joint-venture company to carry through the plan. While much of the detail is still to be decided, the exchanges aim to enable the trading of the largest British and German stocks through a "common access package" by January 1999, when Europe's single currency is introduced.

The exchanges, which combined are second in size only to New York's, will develop a new electronic system through which Europe's top 300 stocks will change hands.

Other European exchanges, unaware of the plans, which have been kept under wraps for two months until a leak on Monday, appear to have little choice but to join the alliance.

The idea of the link came during one of the regular meetings between Gavin Casey, chief executive of the London Stock Exchange, and Werner Seifert, chief executive of Deutsche Börse.

"When we met we found we had the same topic in our notebooks," Mr Seifert said.

Work is now under way to draw up a single set of rules for the new exchange. It is unclear how it will be regulated, though Howard Davies, chairman of the Financial Services Authority does not envisage any regulatory problems.

"We have already been in touch with our German opposite numbers to discuss the way forward," he said.

John Kemp-Welch, chair-

man of the Stock Exchange, contacted the heads of other exchanges in Europe just before yesterday's announcement and said they had expressed an interest in it.

The Paris Bourse, however, issued a terse statement in which it said the idea of a common trading system had been explored in the past, but that the British and German exchanges had got cold feet.

The French exchange said it was pleased to see the two exchanges "holding a more European way today".

The race is now on to decide which index should be deployed as the benchmark across Europe.

The Eurotop 300 system, designed in London, looks as if it might out-perform Stoxx, a German version, although a final decision is yet to be made.

Ultimately, domestic indices will become redundant as investors take a pan-European view of the markets. "The general view of investors is that there will be a point when national indexes will cease to be relevant. But that may be a long time," said Martin Wheatley, head of markets development at the Stock Exchange.

City sources thought the alliance would leave Liffe, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, on the margins of the market. Liffe's management, accused of being slow to respond to the competition from Frankfurt, is thought to have been unaware of the plans of its London neighbour.

"This is today's equivalent to Big Bang," Jeremy Seddon, chief executive of British Invisibles, a trade body part-funded by the Corporation of London.

The alliance aims to make it easier and cheaper to trade stocks in Europe — which will lead to job losses at the 30 or so exchanges across the continent. "One of the aims is to take costs out of the structure," Mr Wheatley said.



Peace pact... Werner Seifert, left, and Gavin Casey, head of the Frankfurt and London exchanges, set their seals on the deal. PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL VICENTE

Joining forces

London Stock Exchange and Deutsche Börse aim to form a strategic alliance

London	Frankfurt
£1.39tn (July 6)	£0.84tn
2,991 (UK 2,465)	1,763
24.0bn	55.07bn
273	291
50	
Best of the rest	
Midwest capitalisation 2.6bn	
New York Stock Exchange	6.05
1.35	
1.22	
0.57	
0.33	
0.30	

Sources: Securities and Finance Statistics 2000

Single currency forces City to raise white flag

CITY figures have insisted the introduction of the euro next year does not pose a threat to the City's standing, writes Jill Treanor.

However, the London Stock Exchange's decision to hold up the white flag and co-operate with Frankfurt is a sign of the rapid change sweeping through financial markets ahead of the euro.

Gavin Casey, chief executive of the Stock Exchange, yesterday outlined the opportunities of a unified Europe. It would have higher gross domestic product than the United States and a rapidly ageing population for whom equities would be the obvious

home for investments. "The euro is a factor but not the only factor."

Exchanges across Europe have been forging alliances while London has appeared slow to join in. Deutsche Börse is in discussions with Nasdaq, the US exchange, about co-operation with exchanges in many European centres.

The drive for co-operation is fuelled by the knowledge that once Europe becomes a true single currency area, the need for domestic exchanges will diminish. Werner Seifert, chief executive of Deutsche Börse, yesterday described the latest alliance as a pre-emptive move against the fragmentation of Europe's

equity market. It should also end "all speculation about the battle between London and Frankfurt which was never intended by either side".

However, a few weeks ago Germany's derivatives exchange, DTE, was relishing the anguish of Liffe in London, which was helpless as the German exchange snatched a leading position in futures trading in German bonds.

The new alliance between the stock exchanges in London and Frankfurt will allow them to share the cost of developing a pan-European trading system, which will need to incorporate the latest technological innovations.

News in brief

Call for law on bosses' pay

UTILITY directors should have performance-related pay linked to league tables of company performance, water watchdog Ian Byatt said. The call for greater transparency came days after the packages awarded to Yorkshire Water and National Grid bosses reignited the "fat cat" row.

Mr Byatt, speaking at a regulation conference, said utilities should be required to publish details of pay schemes. "I understand some directors' pay is related to service standards, but whether these are demanding standards is not revealed," he said. — *Celia Weston*

GE the first \$300bn firm

GENERAL Electric became the first US company to top \$300 billion (£183 billion) in market capitalisation, after a 17-year rise under chairman John F Welch Jr.

GE, with a range of products from light bulbs to loans, saw its stock gaining 33 per cent in a year. The company has added \$100 billion in value in 18 months, and profit has risen 12 per cent in each of the past five years.

Based in Connecticut, GE is also the owner of NBC, the US TV network. — *Bloomberg*

Talk Radio group in talks

THE management buy-out team bidding for national network Talk Radio is due to meet its backers, the Guardian Media Group and United News & Media, later today amid indications that the consortium is set to discuss other media ventures.

The buy-out team, led by the Talk Radio managing director Paul Robinson, faces an uncertain future if it fails — as seems likely — by the rival consortium led by former Sun editor Kelvin MacKenzie. — *Chris Barrie*

Budgens to add stores

Budgens supermarket chain reported a 27 per cent rise in profits before exceptional items, and said it was forging ahead with further expansion beyond its South-east stronghold.

Chief executive John von Spreckelsen said the company was performing well "in a market niche where there is little direct competition". Profits last year reached £10.5 million on a turnover of £386 million. — *Roger Coote*

Old guard to leave Barclays

Jill Treanor

MARTIN Taylor, chief executive of Barclays, yesterday continued his shake-up of the bank's senior management by removing the "old guard" from his powerful executive committee.

The bank also announced a further shake-up of its retail financial services division.

City sources said the changes were part of Mr Taylor's move to ease out some of the members of the management team he inherited when he became chief executive in 1993.

He joined the bank at a difficult

time: it had cut its dividend for the first time and announced losses as a result of the tough market conditions in the early 1990s. He did not adopt a "slash and burn" approach at that time.

The latest senior executives to leave the bank are Richard Reay-Smith, chief executive of UK retail banking, and Fred Grauer, co-chair of Barclays Global Investors. Both were on Mr Taylor's executive committee, which meets weekly to discuss the bank's strategy.

Their departures follow last month's announcement when Oliver Stocken, the finance director, said he wanted to leave the bank at the end of

the year. Barclays confirmed yesterday Mr Reay-Smith and Mr Grauer had decided to leave the group and would be doing so shortly. Mr Reay-Smith, 58, has worked at the bank since 1983. Mr Grauer, 51, joined when Barclays bought Wells Fargo Nikko Investment Advisors, the fund management group, in 1995.

They will be replaced on the executive committee by two women who are both in their 40s — Patti Dunn, who co-chaired Barclays Global Investors with Mr Grauer, and Elizabeth Wade, director of corporate communications.

Ms Dunn will become one of the most senior women at the bank.

The gap on the retail banking side will be filled by Gary Hoffman, currently deputy chief executive of UK Personal, becoming chief executive of UK retail banking with the exception of Barclaycard which will be run by Bob Potts.

Both will report to John Varley, 42, a member of Mr Taylor's executive committee. The bank has come under fire recently for its Barclaycard service which has struggled to keep pace with the demand from customers who complain about constantly jammed phone lines. The bank is striving to improve the service by increasing staff.

Waterstone's to build £3m store

Roger Cowe

WATERSTONE'S is to build Britain's highest bookshop in London's Oxford Street, stretching to four floors and 40,000 square feet. It will include a cafe and event area.

It will be 20 per cent bigger than the chain's last large store opened in September on Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street. The new branch will open early in 2000 after £3 million of investment and will hold a stock of 400,000 books.

Alan Giles, managing director of Waterstone's, said yesterday that the store would be "spectacular, metropolitan and contemporary".

He also disclosed that Dillons' flagship store, on Gower Street close to the University of London, is to be converted to a Waterstone's, ending more than 60 years of Dillons' association with academic bookselling.

The two chains have been part of the same company since last year's merger of

Waterstone's with HMV, which owned Dillons. Since then five of the 78 Dillons stores have been closed and three have been changed to the Waterstone's name.

Mr Giles said yesterday that the Waterstone's format was more profitable than Dillons, most of which would be converted.

"At the time of the merger we decided that in towns where there was a Dillons and no Waterstone's we would convert them, for example in Coventry and Oxford. But there are 21 cities where there are both and we will keep both. So the Dillons chain will continue as the second largest specialist bookseller in the country, but we are diverting resources to the Waterstone's brand."

The Gower Street shop has served generations of students since it was founded by Una Dillon in 1936. Mr Giles said the new name would have little impact on the books inside. "We leave the decisions on what to stock to individual managers."

Gates group set for Cliveden win

Dan Atkinson

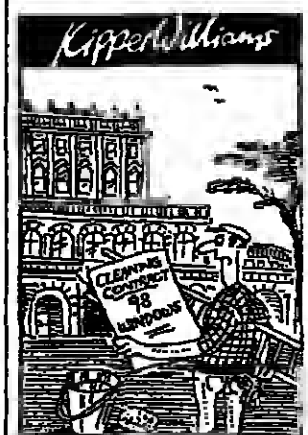
THE battle between two of the world's richest entities for control of Cliveden, the stately home in Berkshire, seemed to be over last night as the consortium headed by Wall Street investment bank Goldman Sachs left the field clear for a syndicate including computer-software

hedge fund Bill Gates, the world's wealthiest man.

Cliveden plc, which operates the hotel at Cliveden, yesterday said shareholders ought to accept the £42.8 million offer from Destination Europe, the group in which Microsoft's founder has a 10 per cent stake.

It was Destination Europe, whose other owners include an arm of Lazard Frères investment bank that made the first offer on June 19, prompting comparisons between the deal and the high-profile takeover of Mr. Gates and the high-profile property group, in which Goldman had the main stake, joined with developer Westmont to mount a rival bid.

But yesterday Goldman said Whitehall had pulled out.



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Racing

Glory days are back for Nosedá

Chris Hawkins

JEREMY Nosedá, the man who had the nerve to turn his back on Sheikh Mohammed, had his first Group winner when Wannabe Grand took the Charles Heston Stakes at Newmarket yesterday.

Nosedá, 35, was one of the key members of the Godolphin team in the days of Lamarr, Balanchine and Heston before embarking on a great American adventure to train in California.

Sheikh Mohammed was his principal patron but after 20 months the dream turned sour and last September Nosedá came back to this country to start from scratch.

There was no benefactor waiting in the wings and Nosedá bought Paul Kelleway's old yard, Shalfleet at Newmarket, with his own money and set about rebuilding and recruiting.

He now has 43 horses of which 38 are two-year-olds and his score so far is 10 wins; not earth-shattering perhaps but Wannabe Grand is the one he has been waiting for and the one that will put him back on the map.

The filly, starting at 11-1, was patiently ridden by Walter Swinburn who brought her with a final-furlong surge to see off the fading favourite Spirit Willing and the gallant Pipaloo who plugged on for second.

"Wannabe Grand always looked as if she was something special but she got beat first time out at Leicester and I couldn't believe it," said Nosedá. "But that's two-year-olds, you never know how they'll react on the track."

"Now she's fulfilling her promise and this Princess Margaret Stakes and Lowther are the obvious targets. But at the moment I'm just enjoying this. It's a huge win for me. I never intended to stay in America. I've always loved British racing. The prize-money may not be the greatest but there are other attractions. There's a romance about the game here that's missing in the States."

Continuing the romantic theme Fruits of Love, trained by Mick Ryan, won the Princess of Wales's Stakes for Irish trainer Mick Doyle. It is 14 years since Doyle was at sea but he now runs his own trainer company and leaves some time to net the fish while he waits the books.

"I've had a few pounds on — did you ever meet an Irishman who didn't?" he said. "But more than the money the win for the horse was the big thing here. He was the most expensive I'd ever bought at 75,000 and when he broke his pelvis last season we thought he would never run again."

Now the St. Leger could be on the agenda for Fruits of Love with a prior entry in the Great Voltigeur Stakes although he will not be over-raced as the firm intention is to keep him in training as a four-year-old.

Johnston, incidentally, had news of his Newmarket 2,000 Guineas runner-up Lord A Hand who will run in the Brandenburg Trophy at Hoppertan in Germany on Sunday en route to the Sussex Stakes at the Glorious Goodwood meeting.

Paul Cole introduced a smart two-year-old in Nimello who floored the favourite Meneer with some ease in the



Final flourish... Fruits of Love (right) comes with a late run to win the Princess of Wales's Stakes. PHOTO: JULIAN HERBERT

Hitman can ruin the party

LADY ROCKSTAR, trained by Mick Ryan, attempts to land her ninth successive race and eighth handicap in a row — just one short of the 20th century record — at Newmarket this afternoon.

When she began her winning run at Ayr in May she was rated 41, but she goes into today's Duke of Cambridge Handicap on a mark of 84, prompting her trainer to comment: "If she goes on improving as much as the handicapper thinks she'll end up winning the Arc!" Ryan has done won-

ders with this filly, keeping her sweet and placing her to maximum advantage. But her winning run is bound to come to an end soon and Hitman (3.10) from the Henry Cecil stable could be the one to spoil the party.

Hitman has taken time to justify a big home reputation, but made all to score over a mile at Yarmouth recently, beating Michael Stoute's "best maiden" Min-h with ease.

Cecil has the Great Voltigeur over a mile and a half as a possible race for Hitman next month as today's

10 furlongs should be well within his compass. Mick Kinane takes over the mount from the suspended champion jockey Kieren Fallon.

This meeting is one of Cecil's favourites. His filly Digitalize (3.40) probably had plenty to do at the weights when runner-up to Hunters of Brora at Newcastle last time and must go close in the Falmouth Stakes.

High Intrigue (5.20) could complete a great day for the master of Warren Place in the Reg Day Memorial Handicap.

Kempton Park evening meeting

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
6.35 Dynamite's Lad Pamphlet Barnard Secret Spring Coral Aldredale	Dynamite's Lad Pamphlet Barnard Secret Spring Coral Aldredale

Verdict: Left-handed triangular course of 1m5f with separate 13m Jubilee Course. Shady R.

Going: Good, Good to Firm in Places. + Denotes blunders.

Draw: High down a day advantage 6.35 & 7.05.

Seven day winners: 7.35 Dorylind, 8.05 Dorylind, 8.35 Dorylind, 9.05 Dorylind, 9.35 Dorylind, 10.05 Dorylind, 10.35 Dorylind.

Blunders or winners first time: N/A.

Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing. Jumps.

6.35 VIRGIN HILLOUTS CLAIMING STAKES 5f £2,850 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

7.05 HELICAL BAR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES 2YO 6f £3,850 (20 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

7.35 COTES DU HORNE HANDICAP 1m 11-10 (12 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

8.05 CITY INDUSTRIAL SUPPLIES HANDICAP 1m 11-10 (14 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

8.35 CITY EVERING MAIDEN STAKES 3YO 1m 11-10 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

9.05 SURREY RACING HANDICAP 1m 11-10 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

9.35 SCOTTISH EQUITABLE JOCKEYS ASSOCIATION SELLING STAKES 2YO 7f £5,345 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

4.45 E.B.F. FRANCIS GRAVES NOVICE STAKES 2YO 7f £5,345 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

5.20 REG DAY MEMORIAL HANDICAP 2m £5,160 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

6.50 BROCKHAMPTON NOVICE CHASE 2m £3,345 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

7.20 WORCESTER STANDARD OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE 2m £2,265 (7 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

Folkestone card

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
2.50 Zola Power Sampson Star Glenview Queen's Star Russett The Force Arzant Wings Assembled	Zola Power Sampson Star Glenview Queen's Star Russett The Force Arzant Wings Assembled

Right-handed, undulating track of 1m3f with 220m run-in. Straight of 6f.

Going: Good, Good to Firm in Places. + Denotes blunders.

Draw: High numbers best in spots.

Seven day winners: 2.20 Daily Dream, 2.50 Daily Dream, 3.20 Daily Dream, 3.50 Daily Dream, 4.20 Daily Dream, 4.50 Daily Dream, 5.20 Daily Dream.

Blunders or winners first time: N/A.

Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing. Jumps.

2.20 CONEY NURSERY HANDICAP 2YO 5f £2,975 (7 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

2.50 MAIDEN AUCTION STAKES 2YO 6f £2,070 (11 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

3.25 MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES 5f £2,705 (5 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

4.00 LEVY BOARD HANDICAP 3YO 7f £2,850 (16 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

4.30 SKODA OCTAVIA HANDICAP 5f £3,753 (12 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

5.05 BRIDGE SELLING STAKES 1m 11-10 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

5.35 FILLES' HANDICAP 1m 11-10 (15 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

6.50 HARPLEY NOVICE HURDLE 2m £3,345 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

7.20 NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE 2m £2,495 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

7.50 HANDICAP CHASE 2m 11-10 (10 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

8.20 HANDICAP HURDLE 2m £2,165 (7 declared)	SKY
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

SPORTS NEWS 15

Newmarket Jackpot card

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
2.05 Glenview (10) Barnard (10) Queen's Star (10) Russett The Force (10) Arzant (10) Wings Assembled (10)	Glenview (10) Barnard (10) Queen's Star (10) Russett The Force (10) Arzant (10) Wings Assembled (10)

Gallop track of 2m11f with high-end bend and heavy races up to 1m run on straight.

Going: Good to Firm. + Denotes blunders.

Draw: No advantage.

Seven day winners: 4.15 Over The Counter, 4.45 Over The Counter, 5.20 High Intrigue.

Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing.

2.05 MORE O'FERRALL STAKES 3YO 1m 21-25 (20 declared)	CH4
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

2.35 TIT INTERNATIONAL AVIATION JULY STAKES 2YO 6f £1,250 (16 declared)	CH4
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10

3.10 INFILTE ENGINEERING DUNE OF CAMBRIDGE HANDICAP 3YO (SHOWCASE RACE) 1m 21-25 (16 declared)	CH4
1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (10) 11-10 6 (1) 0.005 Aldredale (10) 11-10	1 (1) 0.001 Dynamite's Lad (10) 11-10 2 (1) 2.000 Pamphlet (10) 11-10 3 (1) 0.002 Barnard (10) 11-10 4 (1) 0.003 Secret Spring (10) 11-10 5 (1) 0.004 Coral (1

Football

Ortega rekindles United's interest

Ian Ross discovers the brilliant Argentinian's sale price has soared by at least £4 million

MANCHESTER United have renewed their interest in Argentinian's volatile midfielder Ariel Ortega.

Preliminary negotiations between United officials and the Spanish club Valencia opened last weekend shortly after Argentina had been defeated by Holland in the quarter-finals — a game in which Ortega was dismissed after head-butting the Dutch goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar.

United are not alone in coveting Ortega; Liverpool and the Italian club Sampdoria have also asked to be kept informed of developments. Although it is less than 12 months since Ortega arrived in Spain, in a £11million transfer from River Plate of Argentina, he is now regarded as surplus to requirements by Valencia after a series of squabbles with the club.

Despite his success in France 96, Ortega's sale by Valencia is inevitable in the best interests of club morale and internal discipline.

It is likely he will be sold for around \$9 million but United will want to drive a hard bargain and with some justification — Valencia of fered Ortega to them for \$5 million four months ago.

However, if United were to agree a fee with Valencia for Ortega they would face the familiar problem of attempting to satisfy the monumental financial demands of a player



Ortega ... £40,000 a week

who believes himself worth the highest of salaries and would probably demand around £40,000 a week.

It was United's refusal to bow to the demands of already wealthy foreign players which scuppered a proposed £14 million deal brokered last season to bring the Chile striker Marcelo Salas to Old Trafford.

Meanwhile his fellow Chilean international, the 28-year-old central defender Javier Maras, is considering a move to West Ham. At present he plays for Universidad Catolica de Santiago but has said he is keen to move to the Premiership.

Liverpool's attempt to sign the Nigerian defender Taribo West collapsed yesterday when the player announced he intended to honour his contract with Internazionale.

The Merseyside club had agreed a £5million fee with Inter on Monday, but West did not travel to England yesterday lunchtime as had been planned, insisting instead he wanted to remain in Italy.

The Juventus defender Moreno Torricelli has joined Fiorentina for £4.5 million. Torricelli helped Juventus to three Serie A titles and the European Cup in 1996.

Platt ends his playing days and starts trek to management

Mark Tallentire

AFTER the fact now comes the theory for David Platt, who yesterday turned his back on playing and Arsenal's Champions League campaign in an effort to get up to speed on more technical aspects before trying his hand at management.

"I want to travel extensively throughout Europe and South America learning as much as I can about all the different facets of the game," said the 32-year-old former England captain who won 62 caps and scored 27 goals. "I felt 12 or 13 months ago that my playing condition was declining and I couldn't see myself improving as a player."

"When I told Arsène Wenger he wished me good luck and said that he believed that I was making the right decision."

Platt, who was signed from Sampdoria by Wenger's predecessor Bruce Rioch for £4.75 million in July 1995, played 108 games for the Highbury club and scored 15 goals.

Last summer he turned down the chance to manage Southampton and recently also declined an offer from Reading before being signed by the Sheffield United post.

"I realise that the success I achieve in my first role will, to a large extent, determine my career thereafter," Platt said. "I want to serve the best possible apprenticeship and then hit the ground running."

"For the past few years I have written down everything I have learned about the game, tactics, training drills, motivational and development techniques, and I hope to have opportunities to put them into practice."

Platt's transfer fee aggregate of £22.15 million makes him the world's second most expensive player after Ronaldo, although Denilson's forthcoming move to Real Betis will drop him a place.

Platt, a former Manchester United youth and Crewe Alexandra player before Graham Taylor took him to Aston Villa for £200,000, grabbed his chance when, on his eighth successive app-

pearance as an England substitute, he hit the winner in the last minute of extra-time against Belgium in Italia 90.

He spent the next year learning Italian before being signed for £5.5 million in 1991 and then sold him to Juventus in 1992 for £6.5 million. The Turin club offloaded him to Sampdoria in 1993 for £5.2 million.

He possesses a good footballing brain," said Taylor. "If shown the qualities he displayed as a player, I am sure he will be successful."

Fernando Nelson has joined Porto from Villa in a £1.1 million deal. The Portuguese defender spent two seasons at the club after moving for £1.75 million from Sporting Lisbon. Julian Joachim, however, is set to sign a five-year deal at Villa.

Newcastle have signed Carl Serrant from Oldham and Garry Brady from Tottenham. Serrant, an England Under-21 right-back, cost an initial £500,000 — rising to £600,000 — but Brady, a midfielder, arrived on a free transfer after an "administrative error" at Spurs.



Supporting cast ... Eddie Irvine must weigh up huge pros and nagging cons before deciding whether he remains at Ferrari. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL COOPER

Irvine happy to take a back seat

Alan Henry on the Ulsterman who will play second fiddle to his Ferrari team-mate Michael Schumacher in the British Grand Prix

EDDIE IRVINE goes into Sunday's British Grand Prix at Silverstone fully appreciating that fourth place, behind his own team-mate Michael Schumacher and the McLaren-Mercedes of pre-

race favourites Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard, is the best result he can hope for.

It is not something which unduly bothers the free-wheeling 32-year-old from County Northern Ireland. He knows his Ferrari contract requires him to play second fiddle to Schumacher and he joined at the start of the 1996 season happy to agree to those terms.

"I suppose it's good in a way, because you are measuring yourself against the very best," he admits. "You are always aiming to climb Mount Everest every day you get into the car, whereas if there was somebody else in the other car, it would just be

a gentle stroll up the Alps, wouldn't it?"

By the same token, Irvine is seriously considering what would be his best personal career path in the future. "If Michael had broken down in France, I would have won," he smiles, "so it's a matter of deciding whether or not this is the best car available to me, or is there another car, or team, which is nearly as good."

It's a difficult decision, because here at Ferrari we have a good car and a very good team. Strategy-wise, we're second to none, we really are.

"To improve on my situation here would be quite hard, but at the same time I'm always being compared to Michael, which is obviously not the easiest thing in the world."

"If you are running the team, everything goes your way. If you say something which is ignored because

"My money is still on him to win the world championship. Michael is a bit of a phenomenon, isn't he?"

At last week's Silverstone testing, Ferrari and McLaren seemed closely matched. Yet Irvine is in no doubt that Hakkinen and Coulthard go into Sunday's race as firm favourites.

"They are still ahead, you have to say," he insists. "At Magny-Cours I could not have got anywhere near the times which the McLarens were capable of running, had I been behind them."

"Michael obviously could,

but that's Michael. If you just look at normal people, you would have to say that the McLarens are a reasonable step ahead of us on any circuit. We have improved the Ferrari, but I think they still have the advantage."

It is 40 years since the late Peter Collins became the first and so far only British driver to win his home grand prix at the wheel of a Ferrari. Irvine would dearly like to repeat that achievement. Yet it will take Schumacher's car to break down first before he can get the chance. That and both the McLarens.

Melbourne races on to 2006

MELBOURNE will stage the Australian Grand Prix for at least the next eight years. Victoria's state government has exercised its option to host the race for an extra five years beyond the present contract, protecting the Albert Park event until 2006.

The grand prix was held in the South Australian

capital of Adelaide for 11 years before it was switched to Melbourne in 1996 after a US\$36.9 million (\$23 million) deal was signed with the Formula One Constructors' Association.

The race has won the Formula One teams' award for the world's best grand prix for the past two years.

Golf

Montgomerie hopes for home rule

Patrick Glenn at the Loch Lomond course that could terrorise a high-class field

ON the A82, the road that embroils Loch Lomond, a sign greets visitors: "Argyll and Bute Welcome Careful Drivers — and Good Putters Too!"

The third running of the Standard Life Loch Lomond tournament, which has become a kind of glittering chorus line to highlight anticipation of the main attraction — next week's Open Championship at Royal Birkdale — has once again drawn a field short through with quality.

All but three of the current top 20 in the Volvo European rankings — Ernie Els, Retief Goosen and Bernhard Langer — are the exceptions — will take part along with the former Open champion Tom Lehman, who defends his Loch Lomond title.

Lee Westwood, the 25-year-old Nottinghamshire phenomenon who won back-to-back tournaments six weeks ago and is the closest challenger to Colin Montgomerie as Europe's most formidable player, is also a contender, as well as Jesper Parnevik, the Swede who has twice come close to winning the Open, at Turnberry in 1994 and at

Royal Troon last summer. Nick Faldo, whose loss of form is reflected in his starting price, generally around 40-1, remains a draw, however, and the Englishman seeks to use one of his favourite venues to restore some of the old greatness.

All these players try to drive carefully and are modestly good putters, but the weather forecast for the first two rounds, today and tomorrow, suggests that serious concentration and rigid control will be necessary if Lehman's winning score of 12 months ago, an extraordinary 12 under par, is even to be approached.

A blanket of low pressure sweeping down from Iceland, bringing blustery wind and rain, could turn the loch-side track that Faldo called "the best new golf course in the world" into a terror.

Montgomerie, ranked sixth in the world, six places ahead of the precocious Westwood and seven in front of Lehman, is entitled to favouritism, even if he is at risk from an ankle damaged in last week's Irish Open at Druid's Glen.

The injury, strapped up and

causing pain during his walks between shots, did not prevent the Scot from forcing a play-off with David Carter at Druid's Glen, even if he lost at the first extra hole.

Montgomerie began his practice round at 6.30am yesterday in order to be able to rest in the afternoon and, unusually for this player, to practise his swing later in the day. "I never really go to the practice range," he said, "but I'm going there this time to

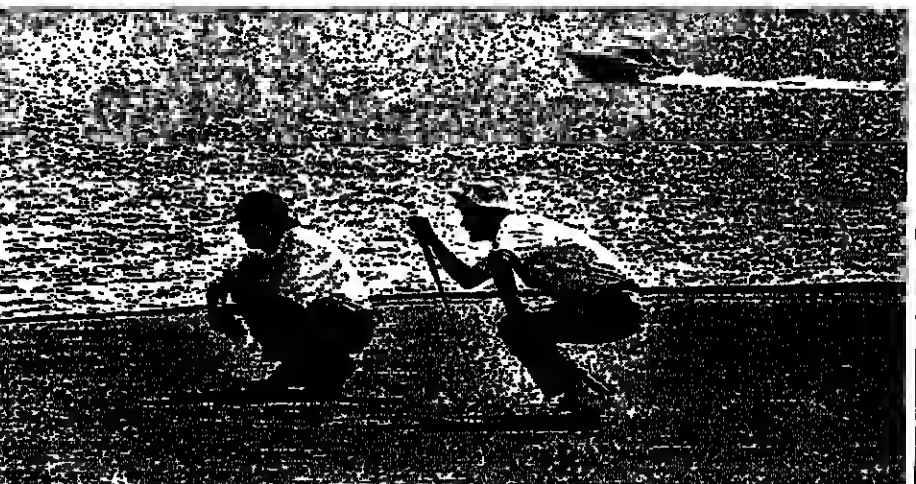
get my rhythm back."

The Scot, heckled mercilessly by American spectators at last month's US Open in San Francisco, expects nothing but encouragement from his home crowd this week. But his personal website, he revealed, has brought great comfort in recent weeks, with messages of support from the United States.

"They have all been very positive," he said, "and it has told me that it is the loud mi-

nority who are to blame. The great majority of American fans support golf, and it's been great to read 80 or 90 messages a day giving support."

Montgomerie, who believes that the putter will be the most important club in the bag, is likely once again to make the frame, but Lehman, Westwood and perhaps the inaugural winner, Denmark's Thomas Bjorn, seem likely to offer powerful challenges.



Lined up ... Jesper Parnevik and his caddy assess a practice putt at Loch Lomond. PALL SEVEN

Rugby Union

Saints quick to snap up Lam

PAT LAM, Newcastle's Western Samoan back-row forward, is to join Northampton for a six-figure sum. The 1997-98 Allied Dunbar Player of the Year still has a year of his three-year contract with the Premiership champions remaining and had been seeking an extension to it as well as better terms.

Lam, who played in all three back-row positions for Newcastle last season, is currently in New Zealand preparing for a series of international fixtures with the Western Samoan team.

The 27-year-old is likely to return to Britain in 10 days' time when negotiations with the Department for Employment over a new work permit for the Saints will begin.

The Scotland forward Richard Metcalfe may soon follow Lam out of Newcastle. The 24-year-old, who is 7ft 11in, is frustrated by the lack of first-team opportunities and has been put on the transfer list.

The All Black Jonah Lomu has been replaced by Josiah Vidra for Saturday's Bledisloe Cup match against Australia in Melbourne.

Results

Golf

US WOMEN'S OPEN (Kohler, Wisconsin): Play-off: 79-8 R Pak (Korj) 1. Chubb (US, amateur), Pak won on second extra hole.

Tennis

ATP SWISS OPEN (Gland): First round: R Agusti (Arg) bt R Federer (Swt) 6-4, 6-2; A Beras (Sp) bt D Gross (Ger) 6-4, 6-1; J Alonso (Sp) bt N Escude (Fr) 6-2, 6-1; M Kiefer (Ger) beat J Vico (Col) 6-4, 6-3 (match stopped due to rain).

WTA SWISS OPEN (Gland): First round: S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4.

WTA SWISS OPEN (Gland): First round: S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4.

WTA SWISS OPEN (Gland): First round: S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4.

WTA SWISS OPEN (Gland): First round: S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4; S Baronesi (Arg) bt D Hecot (Can) 6-7, 5-1, 6-4.

Cricket

INDEPENDENCE CUP, Colombo: India 307-8 (50 overs), S Tendulkar 128, S Ganguly 109, Sri Lanka 201 (46.3 overs). A de Silva 100; Aggarwal 4-34, India won by six runs.

SECOND XI CHAMPIONSHIP, Stafford: Cric Wertheimer 272-7 (M A Smith 60, T Smith 100) v Lancashire 125 (Northants 145-8, Lancashire 125, Northamptonshire won by 20 runs). Lancashire: Cric Wertheimer 145-8, Lancashire 125, Northamptonshire won by 20 runs.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP, Bangladesh 343-8 (Alam Khan 105, Anind Islam 52, Faruque Ahmed 33, Parsons 3-20) v Scotland XI.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP, Bangladesh 343-8 (Alam Khan 105, Anind Islam 52, Faruque Ahmed 33, Parsons 3-20) v Scotland XI.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP, Bangladesh 343-8 (Alam Khan 105, Anind Islam 52, Faruque Ahmed 33, Parsons 3-20) v Scotland XI.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP, Bangladesh 343-8 (Alam Khan 105, Anind Islam 52, Faruque Ahmed 33, Parsons 3-20) v Scotland XI.

The Feathery

1855 - The golf's favourite ball, well, the only ball available in the year Standard Life came into being. Made of layers of dry leather and you've guessed it, feathers.

Gutta Percha

1858 - By now this had become the choice of discerning golfers everywhere, in much the same way Standard Life was becoming the preferred choice among people who wanted a good return on their investments.

Hand Hammered Gutta

1872 - Golf manufacturers had found that the chips made by repeated hitting enabled the ball to travel further. Incidentally Standard Life were also travelling further with 70% of their business coming from abroad.

Wound Rubber Ball

1922 - This was a breakthrough in the modern game. The new style of ball had a solid core. Something that Standard Life had been enjoying for years now.

Modern Ball

1939 - Advances in materials and technology in the construction of the ball meant that people could rely on consistent performance whatever the conditions. Now, who does that remind you of?

Leaders in our field since 1825

STANDARD LIFE

Sponsors of the Loch Lomond golf tournament 8-11 July 1998

Cricket

MacLaurin's new summit aims to raise the English standard

Mike Selvey

LORD MacLaurin, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, seems likely to achieve more radical changes to the County Championship in the wake of the evidence of this summer that for much of the time the English team, while containing quality cricketers, is inconsistent and uncompetitive.

For next season, the chairman of the first-class counties voted in a compromise by revamping the playing structure but shying away from any notion of splitting the championship. Instead the counties have the dubious incentive of being able to contest another one-day competition the following season.

While the party line from the ECB is that the game is thriving, MacLaurin has asked for a meeting of the county chairmen at the end of the season to consider the proposals once more. The move follows the Government decision to remove domestic Test matches from the list of sporting events that must remain on terrestrial television channels as the so-called jewels in the national sporting crown. A more open market it is hoped will increase income into the game and allow more investment.

"Towards the end of the year, we'll have some indication of the finances that will be available to cricket," said MacLaurin yesterday. "It will present us with an excellent opportunity to review the whole structure of the first-class game."

However, there is a feeling that MacLaurin's influence has been diluted since he took over the chairmanship of the ECB at the start of last year. At the time, the game was crying out for strong leadership and MacLaurin, whose record as chairman of Tesco was indicative of his business acumen, looked certain to supply it. The response, though, has been disappointing with MacLaurin adopting a softy softy approach to the county chairmen in an attempt to revamp the system when they might better have responded to a heavier hand.



MacLaurin... high hopes

A two-division championship, not necessarily a panacea but something which most agree has to be tried at least, will probably be offered once more, but unless the counties can be given substantial financial guarantees, he might find that the moment has been lost.

A big double helping of old charisma



Angel on cricket

ABOUT an hour after Angus Fraser had blocked England to safety at Old Trafford, the guests began arriving at a London hotel to honour the man generally regarded as his cricketing forefather, Sir Alec Bedser, and of course his identical and virtually inseparable twin, Eric, for their 60th birthday.

Angus was on the guest list. Understandably, he never quite got there. He would have received an almighty cheer had he walked in late. No one else in the England team could have banked on a similar reception, with the possible exception of Alec Stewart.

This is not just a reflection of their achievements of the day. Both are seen as throwbacks, old-fashioned types, and among the handful of moderns fit even to lick the clodhopping cricket boots of the Bedser generation. It was, anyway, quite a night. I swear I saw Tony Banks ask for John Major's autograph. The former Prime Minister paid tribute to the twins with his customary deftness on these occasions. I sometimes feel he regards the knighthood he bestowed on Alec Bedser as just about the most solid achievement of his premiership.

Richie Benaud, who did make it down from Old Trafford, told his version of the great deciding-which-twin-is-which conundrum. He was originally told that Alec had a mark on his forehead, and he spent half a summer not quite making eye contact trying to use this method. This didn't seem to be working, so he asked someone else. "It's easy," he was told. "Eric's got this mark on his forehead."

Although English cricket had just had one of its good days, one of its great days even, that was not the theme of the evening. In the speeches and in conversations, there was a pervasive sense that the heroes of the past are being let down by their successors. The great Australian batsman Arthur Morris, who flew over specially, recalled the occasion when Alec got Don Bradman out for a duck. He fantasised about the idea of

the imperious captain Walter Hammond marching over from slip to give him a kiss. In reality, nothing happened. They smiled, and stood around for the next batsman. Personally, this seems to me to be taking the stiff upper lip to extremes. But things were different then.

For instance, you would never have dared use the word "marketing gimmick" with Alec or Eric in earshot. Yet of course a pair of famous identical twins was one of the great marketing gimmicks of all time. Alec was a wonderful bowler, and Eric was a very fine county cricketer. But I dare say neither of them would have rated an occasion like this one if they had just been ordinary brothers.

It was their twinning that made them exceptional human beings and created the enduring fascination. This is nothing to do with cricket: the mystical side of their relationship challenges our whole understanding of existence. My mum was 80 yesterday but she didn't rate a gala dinner at the Hilton. But then, there's no one to match my mum. And there is someone to match Alec: Eric. And vice versa.

What wouldn't a modern agent, struggling to find a single cricketer with charisma, give for those two? For the first four days of the Old Trafford Test, cricket had to compete in the marketplace against the overwhelming power of football and Wimbledon. It failed embarrassingly. It is inherently dull for home spectators to watch opposing batsmen rack up runs unless they do it very fast indeed. When they do it as slowly and dreamily as the South Africans, it is excruciating.

THE good news is that their slowness cost South Africa the game. It was ludicrous for a team with so much batting depth not to have kicked on after lunch on Friday. They should never have still been trying to get past 550 on Saturday. In 1967 England dropped Geoff Boycott for scoring the first half of a double-century too slowly, and he was faster than Gary Kirsten.

In the end, the game came right. Because cricket, and especially Test cricket, still has the power to produce epic drama. It's hard telling that the footballing hordes, though, or the Bedser generation.

NatWest Trophy, second round: David Hopps on the outsiders who are aiming to add Derbyshire to their victims today

Scotland show all you need is Love

IT IS A mark of the traditional pessimism surrounding Scottish cricket that when dates were finalised for a brief summer tour by Bangladesh, nobody took too much notice of the potential clash with the second round of the NatWest Trophy.

In future, Scotland will have to take themselves more seriously. A first-round victory against Worcestershire entails that Derbyshire visit the Grange Club in Edinburgh today, while Bangladesh, a country now respected enough to be afforded one-day international status, meet a hastily assembled Second XI in a three-day match at Broughty Ferry.

For Jim Love, the former Yorkshire batsman, and now Scotland's director of cricket, it is a burdensome, yet deeply satisfying time. Qualification for next summer's World Cup in England has provided the motivation in what is already one of the finest seasons in their history.

"There is a totally different attitude in our cricket these days," Love said. "Now the English counties come up here knowing that they are in for a game. But we are certainly up against it at the moment. We are using more players than we can ever remember."

Three counties, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Durham, came within a whisker of defeat in Benson and Hedges Cup group matches this summer, as each time Scotland looked just one bowler short of winning the tie. But a concerted team performance accounted for Worcestershire in the



A fine affair... Jim Love, Scotland's director of cricket, has presided over one of the best seasons in the country's history

NatWest first round a fortnight ago and Bangladesh were routed in Glasgow on Saturday in the first of three one-day matches for the Cairn Trophy. A full-strength Scotland side will contest the final two games this weekend.

Love has succeeded in bringing more practical attitudes to Scottish cricket. A national premier league has been launched this season, uniting the once warring cricketing factions loosely based around Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Many English counties, notably Lancashire and Yorkshire, have failed in attempts to restructure on similar lines, in spite of persistent lobbying by the England and Wales Cricket Board that such changes are essential for the future health of the game.

Support from the national lottery has enabled nine players to turn professional over the summer. With Bangladesh to be followed by an Australian A tour, plus commitments at the European Championships in The Hague and the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, resources are under considerable strain.

Scotland can expect to field a useful seam attack in next summer's World Cup. Gavin Hamilton, Yorkshire's rapidly improving all-rounder, committed himself to Scotland last month, and Northamptonshire's John Blain might follow.

Paceman Mills out on his ear

DAVID MILLS, lacking form after an ear infection, joins James Ormond, who has back problems, on the Leicestershire sidelines against Glamorgan and possibly for Saturday's B & H Cup final against Essex, who take on Hampshire today without the broken-finger

victim Darren Robinson, ruled out for three weeks. The medium-pace Dominic Williamson will probably fill in for Leicestershire. Robert Croft is back for Glamorgan from England duty, and Steve James is determined to play despite a cracked right index-finger.

Athletics

Marshall back in action after drugs ban is lifted

Duncan Mackay

BRITISH athletics has been forced to fall into line with the rest of the world on drugs bans following the decision of the international governing body to reinstate the suspended Guy Marshall.

Officials of the British Athletic Federation had vowed to continue suspending athletes for four years even after the International Amateur Athletic Federation voted last year to halve doping bans to

two years. But Marshall, banned in 1995 after testing positive for a variety of illegal substances, appealed directly to the IAAF in Monte Carlo, which then lifted his suspension.

"I expected to serve the full four years and was prepared to do so," said the 26-year-old from Beverley, Yorkshire. "I'm grateful for the chance to resume my career."

Marshall, who gave six negative tests while banned, has agreed to do what he can in educating young athletes about the danger of taking drugs. "It was such a bad experience that I will make sure this never happens again," he said. "To any youngster who might be tempted, my message is don't. It is just not worth it."

"Now I just want to compete again. I never stopped training and I believe I have enough potential to be among the leading three or four shotputters in Britain."

Sport in brief

Athletics Denise Lewis will take on the former Olympic long-jump champion Heike Drechsler in the Bupa Games at Gateshead on July 19. Drechsler will be one of Lewis's major rivals for the European title in Budapest next month, having won gold at the last three championships.

Golf Sam Torrance has been voted European Golfer of the Month for June after his victory in the Peugeot French Open. It was the 44-year-old Scot's first win for almost three years.

Ice Hockey Nottingham Panthers have signed the Canadian forward Steve Roberts, writes Vic Bacheider. The 24-year-old scored 37 goals in 50 games for the Dayton Bombers in America's East Coast League last season.

Boxing Johnny Nelson will fight the London-based Nigerian Peter Oboh at the Sheffield Arena on July 18 in a support to the World Boxing Organisation cruiserweight title rematch between Carl Thompson and Chris Eubank.

Equestrianism Chris Bartle and this year's Badminton winner Ward Parfitt II held the early lead after the dressage test in the Eventing Grand Prix at the Hickstead Royal International Horse Show, writes John Kerr.

Tennis Max Mirnyi from Belarus, who won the Wimbledon mixed doubles title with Serena Williams, beat the British No. 6 Barry Cowan in the Bristol Challenger Trophy. Mirnyi came from behind after losing the first set on a tie break to win 6-7, 6-2, 6-3.

Football Fabio Pinto, the latest prodigy off the Brazilian production line, has joined the Spanish club Oviedo on a 10-year contract. The 17-year-old striker, who turned professional last year, starred in Brazil's triumph at the World Junior Cup in Egypt last September.



The second offensive begins.

David Hopps returns to the scene of the NatWest Trophy.

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France 98

David Lacey in Paris finds the host nation guardedly optimistic of semi-final victory over Croatia tonight despite a less-than-convincing attack

France look to the defiance of Desailly

GLORIOUS failure is hardly an English prerogative. France were dumping gallantly out of World Cup long before England were being frustrated by the Hand of God and penalty shoot-outs.

This is why the host nation is approaching tonight's semi-final against Croatia at St-Denis in a spirit of qualified optimism rather than rock-solid expectancy. Even their coach, Aimé Jacquet, habitually wears the resigned expression of a French prime minister of the Fifties who knew his government would be lucky to survive the next fortnight.

France are unlikely to lose in open play. Their defence, inspired by the outstanding form of Marcel Desailly and undisturbed by the eccentricities of Fabien Barthez behind it, has so far conceded just one goal. Desailly could be as important to France winning

this World Cup as Bobby Moore to England in 1966, with Laurent Blanc not far behind.

Yet the longer the tournament has progressed the less conviction the French have shown in attack. In the second phase, with Zinedine Zidane suspended, they consistently wandered into a way out only with Blanc's golden goal in late extra-time. Against Italy in the quarter-finals their finishing, crosses and even final passes lacked belief.

More and more France's impetus has come from the back, through Desailly or Lilian Thuram, swift, strong and alert, overlapping on the right. Their ability to break out of deep defence and get men forward quickly is a considerable asset but one which can be properly exploited only if the finishing improves.

In midfield Zidane is alter-

natively brilliant and brooding. With his loping gait and at times extraordinary close control, he is capable of changing a game in an instant but he also has a tendency to drift out of matches at crucial stages. Tonight much will depend on which playmaker, Zidane or Zvonimir Boban, is able to seize the initiative and keep it.

Davor Suker, Croatia have a natural striker. France, on the other hand, have honest triers such as David Trézéguet and Stéphane Guivarc'h. The hosts urgently need Youri Djorkaeff to come good with one of his infrequent but spectacular goals and if Thierry Henry, a substitute against Italy, could recapture his form of the early part of the tournament Croatia's defence may be stretched.

Henry, however, is unlikely to give France the speed and penetration that Mario Stanic provided on the right when Croatia beat Germany. Stop-

France

Goalkeeping
The tall, slender Barthez is not a classical keeper in the sense of safe handling but his positioning is good and he is decisive coming out.

Defence
France's greatest strength. Desailly is impressive both at the back and coming forward and the ability of Thuram to overlap at speed is crucial.

Midfield
Looking slightly weary, particularly Deschamps, but Petit is becoming more of an influence. So much depends on the mood of Zidane.

Attack
Never France's strongest point, they may now look to Trézéguet for inspiration through Guivarc'h must justify Kenny Dalglish's faith in him some time.

Croatia

Goalkeeping
Ladic has a strong understanding with his defenders and is at his most confident. Refused to be fazed by Germany's aerial bombardment in Lyon.

Defence
Solidly built around Stanic, can defend in numbers when they need to and then break quickly.

Midfield
Boban's influence is profound but Croatia will be looking more to the pace of Stanic on the right to turn the formidable French defence. Jarić gives them useful balance on the left.

Attack
Suker will be closely marked but he reveals in that sort of situation and his quick footwork may be too much even for Desailly.

ping Stanic should be a French priority.

France will be praying not merely for a win but a win with style. That may be asking a lot. Before the World Cup, Jacquet was accused of being too cautious and his team too functional. Even his pronouncements appeared to be warning French fans not to expect too much.

"A place in the last four is the minimum we must achieve," he said. "As hosts, we must at least reach the semi-finals. We have no other choice."

"The French public can be critical," Jacquet added, "but I can't imagine that they won't get behind us. It's a massive event and national pride is at stake. Tonight those words could not be more apposite."

In taking France to the semi-finals Jacquet has been as good as his guarded word. The French nation, however, is seeking glory, not a plea of

mitigation. A defeat now and France will be convinced it is destined never to win the World Cup.

Forty years ago France reached the semi-finals in Sweden in spectacular style. An attack inspired by Raymond Kopa, a Polish-born winger, and led by the prolific Just Fontaine, who scored 13 goals in the tournament, swept them to the last four where they were beaten 5-2 by Brazil.

In Spain in 1982, the team of Michel Platini recovered from losing their opening match to England to advance to another semi-final, where they led West Germany 3-1 in extra-time only to be hauled back to 3-3 before losing on penalties. The assault by Harald Schumacher, the German goalkeeper, which put Patrick Battiston into a neckbrace but went unseen by the referee left the French feeling humiliated and cheated.

Two years later Platini and his midfield musketeers, Alain Giresse and Jean Tigana, led France to their only triumph in a major tournament when they hosted and won the European Championship. In the next World Cup that team reached its apogee in Mexico in 1986 with the 1-1 draw with Brazil in Guadalajara which remains one of the finest games ever played.

This time France won the shoot-out but again frustration followed. Another semi-final against the Germans found the French exhausted by their efforts against Brazil and easily beaten 2-0. At least Jacquet's players will face Croatia tonight with the benefit of an extra day's rest.

Should France win tonight, they will be the first host nation to reach a World Cup final since Argentina in 1978. But their followers would still take some convincing that glory lay just four days away.

It has been too long a wait to take anything for granted now.

Mr White Scarf relives smash hits for Croatians

Michael Walker on Miroslav Blazevic, the colourful coach who wears many hats

PLAYBOY. Astrologer. Nomad. Poof. Anyone tempted to write the book on Miroslav Blazevic might think it wise to follow the lead of John Le Carré when coming up with a title. That is until they start investigating the man in depth and find that 10, 20, or 30 words would not be enough to adequately describe a 63-year-old with such a cork-screw tale to tell.

Furthermore, Blazevic's story is not yet finished. Indeed, as the man who has steered Croatia to win in 90 minutes of the World Cup final, he is currently embroiled in the thickest of plots. And, as the imaginary book title suggests, it is not for the faint heart.

Less than three years ago, for example, anyone looking for Blazevic would have found him in the picturesque French town of Aix-en-Provence — in a police cell. Blazevic had been arrested when trying to re-enter France after being linked to the Bernard Tapie-Marseille bribery scan-

dol and spent 16 days behind bars insisting that he was merely "a witness".

Blazevic was later cleared of all charges but the confinement came as the culmination of an unpromising spell in France as manager of Nantes. It was also practically the only time Blazevic failed as a football coach.

He had made his reputation during 1982-83 when, as manager of Dynamo Zagreb, Blazevic led the club to their first Yugoslavian title for 24 years. For this he was accorded folk-hero status in Croatia and just as he has adopted a gendarme's hat in France this summer, Blazevic had a lucky charm then, too. Because of it he became known as Mr White Scarf. Dynamo fans even sang a song about it.

A decade later the same fans would be singing a rather different tune about him but for the years in between Blazevic remained popular, a situation which survived him leaving to coach Switzerland, France and Greece until his return to

Croatia and Dynamo Zagreb in 1992. That return came at the behest of Franjo Tudjman, the first president of the independent Croatia.

Tudjman is a football fanatic and installed Blazevic as the president, coach and, most curiously, the owner of Dynamo.

A championship in Blazevic's first season back was won but then, on the instructions of Tudjman, Blazevic outraged locals by changing the club's name from Dynamo Zagreb to Croatia Zagreb.

Even though the country was in the grip of nationalistic fervour because of the civil war, the blatant politicking incensed supporters who reacted by labelling Blazevic a "poof".

This was not a reference to Blazevic being a homosexual — he is married with three children — it is just that a Croat can hurl after the victory over Germany last Saturday Blazevic said that he was no longer being called poof but instead "maestro".

He was laughing then just as he has been since coming to the World Cup. Asked about the rash of sackings among managers failing to make the second round, for instance, he said: "It's all part of the game. We're not tradesmen, we're adventurers. I consider myself a nomad."

There is a famous story about Blazevic at Dynamo Zagreb. It involves a Rolex watch, one that Blazevic took from his wrist and smashed on to the wall of the dressing-room. He was demonstrating to his players what he wanted them to do to the opposition, and in a poor country this was an impressive act.

It was only after the game that it was revealed that the Rolex was a fake. But Dynamo had won and Blazevic had got his result.

Given that he consults an astrologer Blazevic may already know tonight's result. He said: "I am far too ambitious to be happy with what we have achieved so far. I want to go all the way." If so, another word can be added to that book title — magician.

CROATIA: Ladic, Stanic, Bilic, Srenj, Jarić, Suker, Asanovic, Boban, Stanic, Susic, Vucelic.



Main man... Deschamps, left, is a midfield organiser and France will be looking to him for inspiration against Croatia in St-Denis tonight

MICHAEL ELLER

The perfect platform for Deschamps to conduct the music and silence his critics

Paddy Agnew in Clairefontaine finds the France captain showing no sign of nerves

AFRONT window of the chateau at France's training headquarters opens and Didier Deschamps leans out, shouting: "A table!"

The 29-year-old team captain is used to calling his men to heel. Be it with the Italian champions Juventus or with France, the role of Deschamps is that of a midfield organiser, the man who creates the perfect platform for the creative skills of Zinedine Zidane. His midfield partner for club and country.

Yet, despite an impressive curriculum vitae that includes three Italian titles, two French titles (with Marseille) and two European Cup medals (Marseille and Juventus), Deschamps

does not impress everyone. At a kerb-side café table late one night the BBC pundits Mark Lawrenson and Martin O'Neill both questioned Deschamps' contribution to the side. He had already been dismissed by Eric Cantona as a "water carrier".

The point is that Deschamps is to the France coach Aimé Jacquet what Zvonimir Boban represents for Croatia or Dunga for Brazil. He is the main man, and not just for summoning team-mates to lunch.

It may be true that Deschamps has been less than dynamic at this World Cup. Like his Juventus team-mates Alessandro Del Piero, Angelo Di Livio and Angelo Peruzzi, he may be

paying the price of a tough, but title-winning season with the Turin club.

Deschamps said in January: "Modern football puts too much physical and mental stress on players. Sometimes you get to the end of the season and your body is just screaming for a rest, something just has to give." Fortunately for Deschamps, nothing has so far.

Yesterday he neither

looked nor sounded like a man under pressure; rather, as he quietly answered questions, it became clear that he regards the chance of a first French World Cup final appearance with equanimity.

"Before the World Cup I didn't expect to see this level of enthusiasm. French fans turning up in thousands dressed in the French shirt, painted in French colours. This is something new in France," he said.

"During the penalty shoot-out against Italy I got the impression that French spectators, French television viewers and everybody in the country was more tense than we players in the centre circle."

Even the thorny question of France's lack of a goal poacher did not worry him. "We mustn't create a mental block for ourselves about this," he said. "The

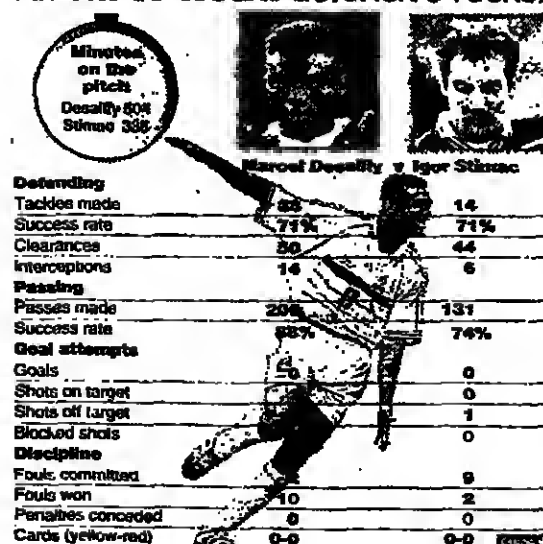
important thing is that the midfield is creating chances and that it continues to create chances against Croatia."

And what of the Croatia coach, Miroslav Blazevic, under whom he played in the mid-Eighties at Nantes? "I owe him a lot, he gets the most out of players, he's very sure of himself. He has technically gifted players but he has given them defensive rigour and brought balance to the team."

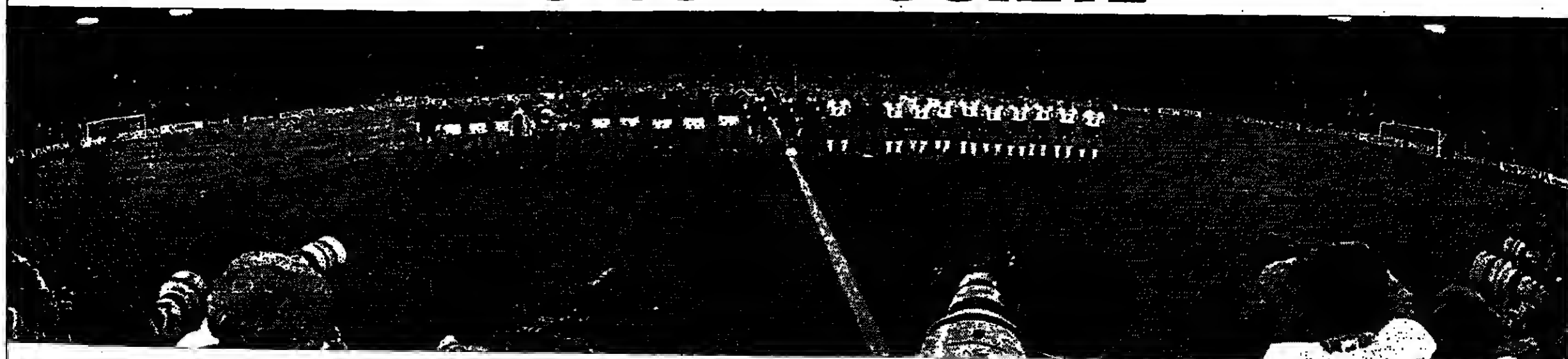
On a yellow card in tonight's semi-final, Deschamps promised yesterday that this would not inhibit his normal terrier style, adding: "I don't care who wins the other semi-final. I don't care who we meet in the final. The important thing is that we make the final." And so says all of France.

Cantona the movie star, 62

Head-to-head defensive rocks.



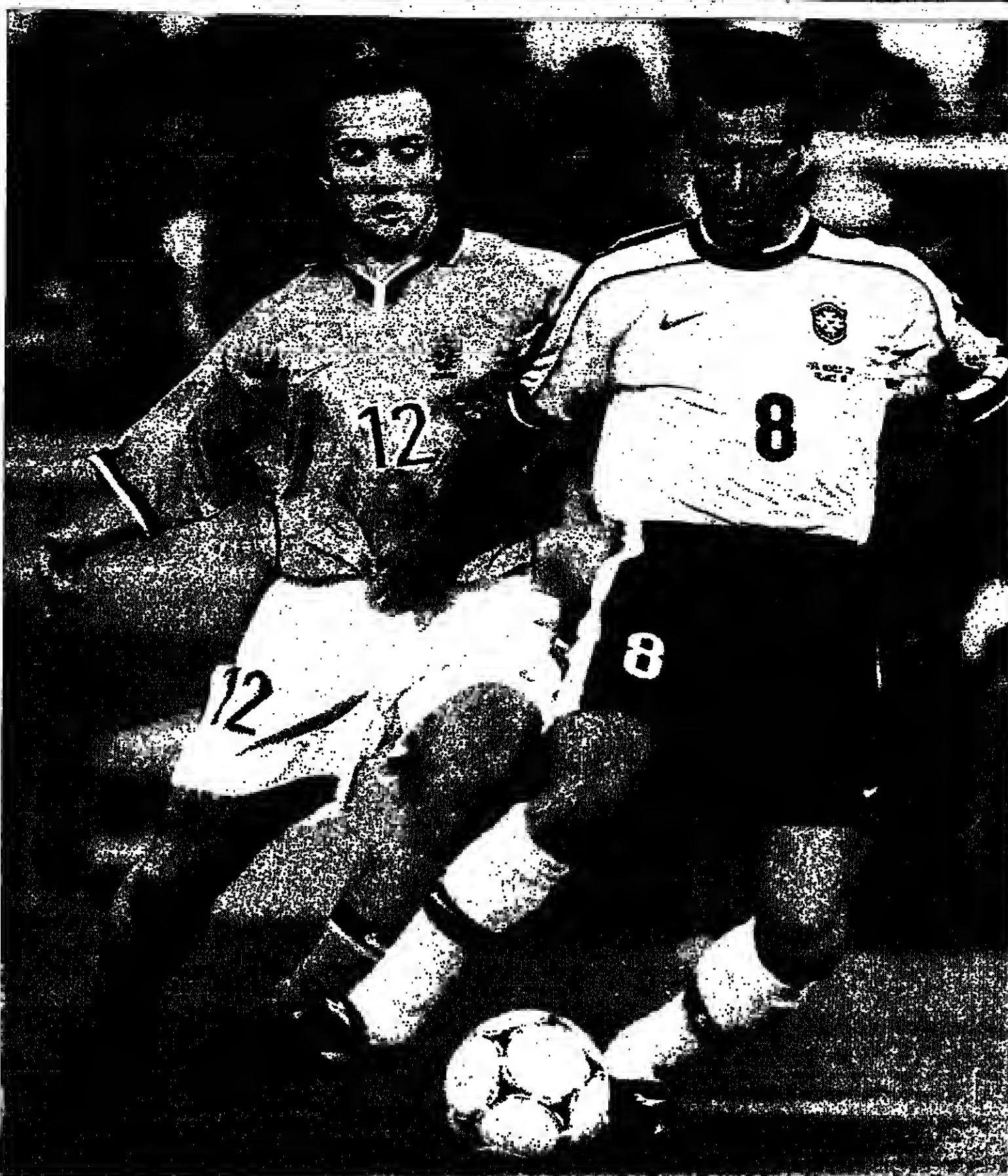
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France 98



Captain courageous... Dunga fends off Holland's Boudewijn Zenden in the semi-final in Marseille last night

PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS KENZLE

All drug tests on players 'have proved negative'

ALL 240 dope tests in the first 60 matches of the World Cup have proved negative, Fifa said yesterday. Dr Michel D'Hooghe, the Belgian chairman of Fifa's sports medical committee, said: "It gives me great satisfaction, but we are not claiming a total victory yet as there are still four matches to play."

"However, the majority of players who are still to play have already been tested and

we are hopeful that by the end of the tournament there will be perfect compliance of the Fifa regulations." Two players from each team are tested after every match following a random draw made at half-time.

The benefit match due to take place this Saturday for the French policeman still in a coma after an attack by German hooligans has been postponed until November.

Finals too long, says Blatter

FRANCE 98 is too long and the final kicks off too late, said the newly appointed Fifa president Sepp Blatter yesterday. "The next World Cup should be shortened by four or five days," said Blatter. "Thirty-two days is really a long period. But he conceded that a time reduction 'is not easy'."

In an attempt to solve the problem, Blatter suggested playing more matches a day during the first round. But he admitted that any such changes would need to be discussed with the television companies.

The final at St-Denis on Sunday kicks off at 9pm French time, and Blatter said he was unhappy with that, too. "It means we cannot have a party on the same day of the final," he said. "It will have to be held in the early hours on Monday morning."

Blatter denies that he has promised the 2006 World Cup finals to Africa, saying that it "needs to be able to offer the necessary structures" to secure the tournament. However, he has made it clear that he favours a rotation system between the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Argentina have appointed their successful Under-21 coach Jose Pekerman as their interim senior coach after the departure of Daniel Passarella.

Carlos Bilardo, who guided Argentina to their 1986 World Cup triumph, is reported to be one of the interested candidates.

Throughout the World Cup, Argentina have been criticised at home for their style under Passarella.

"What annoyed me most," said Diego Maradona, "was that our players did not play their own game, but

played like Europeans. I would have been happy if we had gone down playing our own style. But Argentina came out playing like Germany while at the same time Holland played like a merry dance."

One punter will collect more than £500,000 if Brazil lift the World Cup this Sunday.

Adrian Fitzpatrick, of Birmingham, placed an £18,000 double on Brazil to retain the World Cup and Arsenal to win the Premiership, both at 9-2 last August. If his double is realised, Fitzpatrick stands to receive £544,000 from the bookmakers William Hill.

He hopes to repeat his success of 1994, when he won £235,000 after betting on Manchester United and Brazil for the same trophies.

Road to the final



A P W O L F A Pts

Brazil	3	0	0	3	9
Norway	3	1	0	5	6
Morocco	3	1	1	5	4
Scotland	3	0	1	2	0
West June 10: St-Denis					
Brazil	2				
Cesar Sampaio 4, Boyd (og) 73					
Scotland	1				
Craig (pen) 35					
Attendance: 20,000					
West June 10: Montpellier					
Morocco	2				
Nor 30, Hadda 50					
Boyd (og) 45, Eggen 62					
Attendance: 22,750					
West June 10: Bordeaux					
Scotland	1				
Boyd 67					
Norway	1				
H F 46					
Attendance: 30,250					
West June 10: Nantes					
Brazil	3				
Ronaldo 10, Rivaldo 45, Bebeto 50					
Morocco	0				
Attendance: 32,500					
West June 10: Marseille					
Brazil	1				
Ronaldo 78					
Norway	2				
T A F 80, Pineda (pen) 88					
Attendance: 55,500					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Scotland	0				
Morocco	3				
Ronaldo 22, Hadda 47					
Attendance: 36,000					

C P W O L F A Pts

France	3	0	0	3	9
Denmark	3	1	1	3	4
S Africa	3	0	2	1	0
S Arabia	3	0	1	2	0
West June 10: St-Denis					
Denmark	1				
Ryberg 60					
Attendance: 33,140					
West June 10: Marseille					
France	3				
Duguey 35, Hadda (og) 78, Henry 90					
South Africa	0				
Attendance: 65,077					
West June 10: Toulouse					
South Africa	1				
McCarthy 55					
Denmark	1				
Holten 13					
Attendance: 46,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
France	4				
Henry 35, 77, Tzagouras 60, Lizarazu 85					
Saudi Arabia	0				
Attendance: 75,000					
West June 10: Lyon					
France	2				
Dardou 13, Pelt 56					
Denmark	1				
M Lachup (pen) 42					
Attendance: 43,500					
West June 10: Bordeaux					
South Africa	2				
Holten 13, (og) 90					
Saudi Arabia	2				
Al-Jabir (pen) 45, Al-Thayyan (pen) 73					
Attendance: 34,500					

D P W O L F A Pts

Nigeria	3	0	1	5	6
Paraguay	3	1	0	3	3
Spain	3	1	1	3	4
Bulgaria	3	0	1	2	1
West June 10: St-Denis					
Paraguay	0				
Attendance: 25,600					
West June 10: Nantes					
Spain	2				
Hernandez 21, Raul 47					
Nigeria	3				
Adewale 24, Lawal 73, Okech 79					
Attendance: 35,257					
West June 10: Paris					
Nigeria	1				
Okpara 10					
Attendance: 40,500					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Spain	0				
Paraguay	0				
Attendance: 25,300					
West June 10: Lyon					
Spain	6				
Hernandez (pen) 6, Luis Enrique 18, Hernandez 33, 51, 55, 60					
Bulgaria	1				
Kostadinov 56					
Attendance: 40,500					
West June 10: Toulouse					
Nigeria	1				
Okpara 10					
Paraguay	3				
Ayala 1, Benoit 58, Cardoso 86					
Attendance: 36,000					

E P W O L F A Pts

Holland	3	1	0	7	5
Mexico	3	1	0	7	5
Belgium	3	0	0	3	3
S Korea	3	0	1	2	1
West June 10: St-Denis					
South Korea	1				
Seo 21					
Attendance: 75,000					
West June 10: Bordeaux					
Belgium	2				
Wouters 43, 48					
Mexico	2				
Garcia Aspe (pen) 58, Blanco 63					
Attendance: 34,700					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Holland	5				
Coca 37, Overman 41, Bergkamp 71, Van Hoolbeek 70, R De Boer 83					
South Korea	0				
Attendance: 60,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Holland	2				
Coca 4, R De Boer 19					
Mexico	2				
Pineda 75, Hernandez 90					
Attendance: 35,500					
West June 10: Paris					
Belgium	1				
Van 7					
South Korea	1				
Yoo 70					
Attendance: 48,000					

F P W O L F A Pts

Germany	3	2	1	6	7
Yugoslavia	3	1	0	4	3
Iran	3	1	0	2	3
US	3	0	0	3	0
West June 10: St-Denis					
Yugoslavia	1				
Makovic 73					
Iran	0				
Attendance: 30,392					
West June 10: Paris					
Germany	2				
Moller 8, Klummen 65					
United States	0				
Attendance: 43,675					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Germany	2				
Makovic 13, Djedje 54					
Yugoslavia	2				
Makovic 40, 77					
Attendance: 40,775					
West June 10: St-Denis					
United States	1				
Makovic 67					
Iran	2				
Gill 40, Makovic 84					
Attendance: 44,000					
West June 10: Montpellier					
Germany	2				
Shelton 51, Klummen 58					
Iran	0				
Attendance: 35,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Yugoslavia	1				
Konjic 4					
Attendance: 38,000					

G P W O L F A Pts

Romania	3	2	1	0	7
England	3	2	0	1	6
Colombia	3	1	0	2	3
Tunisia	3	0	1	2	1
West June 10: St-Denis					
England	2				
Shawyer 42, Scholes 90					
Tunisia	0				
Attendance: 54,597					
West June 10: Lyon					
Romania	1				
Ra 45					
Colombia	0				
Attendance: 37,672					
West June 10: Montpellier					
Colombia	1				
Salas 55					
Tunisia	0				
Attendance: 35,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Romania	2				
Moldovan 47, Petrescu 90					
England	1				
Owen 85					
Attendance: 37,500					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Romania	1				
Moldovan 72					
Tunisia	1				
Souayah (pen) 10					
Attendance: 80,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Colombia	0				
England	2				
Anderson 20, Bestman 90					
Attendance: 41,275					

H P W O L F A Pts

Argentina	3	3	0	7	9
Croatia	3	2	0	1	6
Jamaica	3	1	0	2	3
Japan	3	0	0	3	0
West June 10: St-Denis					
Argentina	1				
Shawyer 28					
Japan	0				
Attendance: 33,400					
West June 10: Lyon					
Jamaica	1				
Earle 46					
Croatia	2				
Staric 27, Prohaska 63, Suter 80					
Attendance: 30,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Japan	0				
Croatia	1				
Suter 77					
Attendance: 30,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Argentina	5				
Owen 35, 55, Bestman 75, 78, (pen) 83					
Jamaica	0				
Attendance: 48,500					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Argentina	1				
Prohaska 30					
Japan	0				
Attendance: 35,000					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Argentina	1				
Shawyer 70					
Jamaica	2				
Whitson 58					
Attendance: 43,500					

I P W O L F A Pts

Italy	3	2	1	0	7
France	3	2	0	1	6
Paraguay	3	1	0	2	3
Spain	3	1	0	2	3
West June 10: St-Denis					
Italy	2				
Bellocchi 11, 27					
Ronaldo (pen) 45, 70					
Colo 65					
Attendance: 49,300					
West June 10: St-Denis					
Italy	2				
Bellocchi 11, 27					
Ronaldo (pen) 45, 70					

SportsGuardian

France 98

First semi-final: Brazil 1 Holland 1 (after 90 minutes)

Kluivert takes Brazil to the limit

Ronaldo goal pegged back

Richard Williams
in Marseille

WITH a classic example of cold and economical finishing only 18 seconds after the start of the second half, the great Ronaldo scored his fourth goal of the 1998 World Cup to give Brazil the lead in their semi-final against Holland last night.

But five minutes from the end of normal time, just when Brazil seemed to have the game wrapped up, a header from Patrick Kluivert sent the two teams in search of a golden goal to determine who would go the final in Paris on Sunday.

The stirring sight of the two teams in their traditional colours was matched by the sound of two incomparable sets of supporters respecting and applauding each other's national anthems, although the noise as the match began suggested that the crowd still had plenty of energy left after several hours of parading and chanting in the streets outside the Stade Vélodrome.

In terms of meetings in World Cup finals, the teams started all square, with Holland's 2-0 victory in the semi-final of 1974 in Dortmund, their goals scored by Cruyff and Neeskens, matched by Brazil's 3-2 win in their quarter-final in Dallas 20 years later, a game decided by Branco's long-range free-kick.

Gus Hiddink's brusque pre-match dismissal of the South Americans — "I prefered the Brazilians of 1994 to this team, which has a disorganised attack" — was largely born out by the pat-

tern of the first half in which Brazil, showing little in the way of coherence, were forced on to the defensive for long periods by the thoughtful approach play of Hiddink's team.

At right wing-back, the suspended Cafu's place was taken by Zé Carlos, Brazil's fourth choice in the position, making his international debut at the age of 29. The son of itinerant farm workers on the fringe of the Matto Grosso, he was an undistinguished semi-professional midfielder player until three years ago, when he emerged in his present position with São Paulo.

He was directly opposed not by the speed of Marc Overmars, whose hamstring injury was worsened by his brief appearance in the quarter-final, but by the trickery of Rondeewijn Zenden, the 21-year-old PSV Eindhoven left-winger who will begin next season in Barcelona's colours.

Hiddink replaced his suspended left-back Arthur Numan with the astonishingly adaptable Philip Cocu, who began the competition as the holding midfielder player against Belgium and played in subsequent matches at centre forward and on the left wing.

Ronaldo's first contribution came after 15 minutes, when he muscled past Cocu before racing into the area, where Stam came across to smother the Brazilian's shot. Five minutes later a neat throw-in routine between Roberto Carlos and Rivaldo produced a cross which Bebeto, outjumping Jaap Stam, headed narrowly over. And when Ronaldo chested down Rivaldo's



Stam of authority ... the Dutch defender clears his lines as Ronaldo closes in, while Ronald de Boer provides cover

PHOTOGRAPH: RASH MOGHRAES

long diagonal ball and started to sprint towards goal, Frank de Boer read his intention perfectly.

Cesar Sampaolo, scorer of three goals in earlier rounds, received the second Brazilian yellow card of the night for a foul on Wim Jonk moments before, and with the final

move of the first period, Kluivert put a difficult header over after a patient build-up on the right by Ronald de Boer and Jonk.

After less than 20 seconds of the second half, Brazil were ahead. Rivaldo, almost invisible in the first half, slid a pass into the Dutch penalty area to

meet Ronaldo's run. Under pressure from Cocu, the Brazilian controlled the ball with one touch of his left foot before using the same instrument to guide it past Edwin van der Sar.

Only Taffarel's reflexes prevented Holland from drawing level five minutes later when Kluivert's downward header

from Jonk's corner was met by Frank de Boer at the far post with an instant half-volley which the Brazilian goalkeeper brilliantly tipped behind.

Holland's need to press for an equaliser seemed likely to open them up to the danger of rapid counter-attacks, and only desperate tackles res-

cued the situation when Jonk and Davids gave the ball away in midfield.

When Cesar Sampaolo started to burst forward after another Dutch move had broken down, Davids was booked for flattening the midfielder.

After conceding another free-kick, Holland were torn apart by a smooth Ronaldo-Bebeto combination which required all Van der Sar's speed and courage, first to beat Ronaldo to the ball and then to gather the rebound from under the feet of Leonardo.

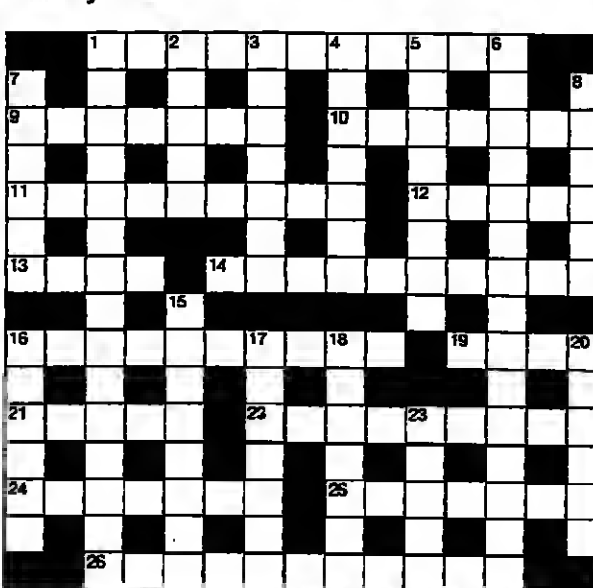
With 20 minutes to play, there were cheers from the Brazilian fans when Mario Zagallo sent on Denilson for Bebeto, in the hope of holding the ball up in the Dutch half and giving the orange defenders something to think about once more.

SUBSTITUTIONS Brazil: Denilson for Bebeto, 70min; Emerson for Leonardo, 65. Holland: Winter for Roldiger, 57; van Nistelrooy for Zenden, 75. **BOOKED** Brazil: Zé Carlos, Cesar Sampaolo. Holland: Roldiger, Davids, van Nistelrooy. **REPLACES** A Mohamed Boudjem (UAR).



Guardian Crossword No 21,321

Set by Paul



Across

- 1 Censor set about 'The Sun' editing 'dirt' to make sweet (7,4)
- 9 Betting rhythm required for bowling movement (7)
- 10 An idiot on the river Scheldt (7)
- 11 Running away together from work, into the rain perhaps? (8)
- 12 Incisor, a canine to a postman? (5)
- 13 U 2 (4)
- 14 Difficult case for Mrs Reagan with Germany in uprising (10)
- 15 Sell cheap, as 8, 13, 19 and 23 have to do without 'down' (2,3,1,4)
- 19 Certainly not Old 21 (4)
- 21 Scotsman backs service in Scotland (5)

Down

- 22 The friend of a relative is a fair target (4,5)
- 24 Sitting after standing (7)
- 25 Something to eat, appropriate almost every one scoffed (7)
- 26 Curly hairdo in 13 style, yet bizarrely it's a seed plant (11)
- 1 Case inspectors cracked — cost of crime? Fuss (7,8)
- 2 Epic tortured on the rack? (5)
- 3 Those hoping for a nibble ran with legs crossed (7)
- 4 Conscript places makeshift boat in the river (7)
- 5 Very little response to disease from Tony Blair's first aid kit? (6)
- 6 8, 13 and a bit 23! (3,4,4,4)
- 7 Assembly of mountain railway? (4-2)
- 8 Active 2 (6)

15 Ruffian gets around trap (not fair) (8)

16 2 2 (6)

17 Fame achieved by switching autocracy's leaders (7)

18 Topless Poles entertained continuously (3-4)

20 Solvers not finished? Same again! Editor became very unsettled (2-4)

23 Horrible 2 (5)

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